



A

# VISIT TO ITALY.

BY MRS. TROLLOPE,

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"PARIS AND THE PARISIANS," "VIENNA AND THE AUSTRIANS,"

"DOMESTIC MANNERS OF THE AMERICANS,"

ETC ETC

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## ERRATA.

In pages 258, 259, and 260, for *Borgello* read *Bargillo*.

In page 393, &c., for Professor *De Bazer* read *De Bayer*.

# A VISIT TO ITALY.

## LETTER I.

Journey from Paris to Lyons.—Misadventure at starting.—Observatory.—Traces of the inundation.—Museum.—Poussin's Sacraments.—Approach to Savoy.—Beauvoisin.—Pass of the Echelles.—Chambéry.—Good Friday.—Enforced fast.—The river Guïères.—Savoyard costumes.—Lans-le-bourg.—Mont Cenis.

Turin, April 13, 1841.

How, my dear friend, can I hope to make letters from Italy interesting to you? how dare I venture to attempt it after the rich multitude of descriptive travellers who have gone before me? Basil Hall, as acute in criticism as profound in observation.... Basil Hall says, "In this poor exhausted Italy, countless classical scholars, men of wit and fancy, Blues, Roman Catholics, Protestants, Poets, Painters, Philosophers, with ten thousand others of all persuasions, capacities, politics, tastes, and experiences, have worried and scourged the land till it will scarcely bear a blade of decent grass or even a thistle for any stray donkey that



may be passing.".... It must be a bold donkey, you will say, who, after this, shall venture to bray about Italy; and a bolder one still, perhaps, who shall venture to differ from one whose judgment ever carries weight with it. But, despite the host of observers who have preceded me, I still 'feel a longing to gossip a little about this Italy, partly, perhaps, from my inveterate habit of gossiping about everything, and partly, because I am of opinion that an immense majority of the inferences which have been deduced by trotting travellers from the aspect of the scenes through which they passed, have been exceedingly unsound, however unintentionally so. Even as to the outward and visible part of the business, descriptions made with all fidelity of spirit may, nevertheless, vary as widely as the tastes, temperament, and character of those who furnish them; and as great variety of interest, therefore, may arise from this as from any other source, deriving its value from individual opinion. So much by way of prefatory apology, dear friend, for writing to you from Italy at all; but as to all the heterodoxy which may follow, I shall make *no* apology, unless you will accept as such the statement of the fact, that I have been too long in the habit of speaking of all things as they appear to me, to be able to change it now, even if I wished to do so.

\* \* \* \* \*

I have certainly no overweening partiality to

France or Frenchmen, yet somehow or other I never enter Paris without a vivid sensation of pleasure, or leave it without a corresponding portion of regret. Even on the present occasion, with "un voyage à faire et *Naples* au bout," I longed to linger a little in that curious and most incongruous museum of everything that is fair and foul, dark and dazzling, polished and brutal, tragic and gay. The being told that the impressionable natives had not yet recovered from their fit of political hatred against us ought, in all reason, to have cured this longing....but no; with most contemptible perversity I still wished to stay, if only to witness how this hatred, so loudly talked of, would show itself, not having, to say truth, any great fear that it would prove troublesome. To stay there beyond two days was, however, out of the question; and, turning our backs on the dear, dirty bewitchment, we started upon an enterprise requiring a good deal of moral courage to undertake, and an equal portion of physical strength to perform....in a word, after considerable doubt and various consultations, we set off by the diligence to travel day and night over the three hundred and thirty miles which divide Paris from Lyons. When this feat was finally decided on, my son left me to secure places in the *coupé*, the only part of the awful vehicle in which there is any chance of being able to sleep,—and on his return, brought the very disagreeable intelligence

that he had secured the only remaining place in it for me. Tedious and tiresome enough must ever be the journey from Paris to Lyons under every possible contingency . . . not even the first quarter of the honey-moon could render it otherwise, for it is long, toilsome, and exceedingly devoid of interest. But in my case these evils were considerably increased; for not only was I separated from my travelling companion, *par excellence*, but doomed to endure the company of two very singularly un-agreeable Frenchmen. My case was the harder, because, during the *longsome* interval between leaving Paris and arriving at Lyons, (sixty mortal hours!) they neither of them said or did anything that could be either reasonably complained of . . . or laughed at. But, unhappily, I destroyed at the moment of setting off every wish on their part of being amiable, by being myself guilty of an act which I felt, as Cromwell said, to be one of "stern necessity," but which to them appeared, I dare say, as one equally uncourteous and tyrannical. In short, I refused to let a huge *chien de chasse* complete the *partie carrée* during three days and two nights of such very close juxtaposition. Thereupon the countenances of my two middle-aged chasseurs spoke a maturity of displeasure that I was exceedingly sorry to have excited, and the "cher amour," as one of them called the dog, was consigned to the care of the con-

ductor. But the displeasure remained in the coupé with us, seeming to my fancy to take a palpable form, and making up altogether as disagreeable a party as I ever travelled with. "Time and the hour," however, did their accustomed duty punctually, so we got to Lyons at last, and right glad was I to find myself free from both dogs and men, in a comfortable apartment at the Hôtel du Parc.

The position of Lyons reminded me of New York, the Rhône and the Saône enclosing the principal part of the old city, as the north and east rivers do the point of Manhattan island on which stands the queen of transatlantic cities. The glorious point at New York, called the Battery, has, however, nothing to rival it at Lyons; but the noble quays of the Saône, and the Rhône, as well as the picturesque heights, up which the town is climbing, make it altogether a far more beautiful city. We mounted to the top of the hill, ay, and to the top of the observatory tower also, to look out upon the magnificent extent of country spread out beneath, with its sublime outline of glaciers, and old Jura in the midst of them. We looked out too, alas! upon the traces, still painfully visible of the frightful inundation by which it had been recently visited. To have stood upon the top of this tower when the calamity was at its height, must have been very like looking down upon the Deluge. The scenes that ensued were, they say,

most awfully terrific, and followed by a degree of destitution and misery, far greater than anything on record from a similar cause.

We saw as much of the city as a long day would allow, but doubtless left much unseen; it has, however, too many indications of being, like our own manufacturing towns, the sordid root from whence springs the rank luxuriance of commercial wealth, to make any close examination of it agreeable. There are a few good pictures in the museum. . . . The boar hunt by Sneyders is a masterpiece. It was a little cruel in Mrs. Starke, however, to tell us that it contains "celebrated drawings by Poussin of the seven sacraments." There are unquestionably seven drawings, and very fine drawings too, of Poussin's seven sacraments, but they are by the hand of his engraver instead of his own, and the defeated hope of looking upon the great master's first *ébauche* of these splendid pictures, was but ill-atoned for by the careful copying of this artist.

Nothing that I can remember in all my various travellings, produced a more exciting effect upon my spirits than the gradually increasing interest of the country in approaching Savoy. "Je ne sais pas pour moi," as Philomirole says, "si chacun me ressemble;" but I never draw near to any mountainous region without feeling as if every nerve were new-strung, and braced for energy, fatigue, and enjoyment. I have felt this on coming within sight of Snowdon, Helvellyn, the Alleghanies, the Sir-

bengeberg, the Hartz, the Tyrol, but never so strongly as when drawing near to the Alps of Savoy.... For was not Italy beyond them?.... Italy to be now seen for the first time, after a life passed in longings to look at her, and in listening with perhaps partial fondness to the mighty voices she has sent forth, which no Alps could shut in, and to which few *tramontane* ears can listen unmoved?

\* \* \* \* \*

On the morning of the 11th April we reached the frontier at a place called Pont de Beauvoisin, an appellation which must doubtless have been bestowed upon it when the parties on both sides were in particularly good-humour with each other. Here we breakfasted, and had our baggage examined by the Sardinian authorities.... civilly, but carefully; not a morsel of printed paper escaped notice. Happily we had nothing to offend, and passed on unscathed.

Few portions of the earth's surface can exceed the pass of Les Echelles in picturesque beauty... upon this we now entered, and I could not but fancy that nature was now performing an overture to the grand *opera* about to be displayed to us when the barrier curtain of the Alps should no longer intervene. Chambéry, where we dined, though a very rustic-looking little town for a capital, almost startles one by its tame air of habitable worldliness. It puzzles one to find a motive for building a town in such a spot;.... but now it is

## THE RIVER GUIÈRES.

built, I should exceedingly like to while away a fortnight there, if it could be done without expending time intended for more important purposes elsewhere. It is sometimes useful, I think, in making notes upon countries rich in landscape, to stand still now and then, and point steadily, like a good serviceable handpost, at the points most calculated to produce pleasure to those who may follow in the same path; and upon this principle I must pause for a moment, though exactly at the point where the ardent curiosity of *tramontane* invaders urges them onward with the strongest impulse, in order to scale the Alps to which, at length, they have so nearly arrived. . . . I must pause for one moment, and ask them to halt, and look about them for a few hours, ere they leave behind such scenery as that which borders the stream dividing Savoy from France. The Guières, which is almost a torrent, bustles along with the hurried pace of an alarmed sentinel, anxious to leave no unguarded spot for the ingress of a troublesome neighbour; and if bridges were not, this bustling stream might perform the duty of a guardian very effectually to both its banks. But in this case, as in many others, man will not permit nature to take care of him, and a bridge has been thrown across the Guières, over which, fire and sword, blunderbuss and bayonet, may be conveyed with the most perfect convenience. It is a few miles from this bridge, on the Savoy side, that the aspect of the country

becomes remarkable for its bold and capricious variety of form ; rocks, waterfalls, and forest, all assisting to render it magnificent. Art, too, comes in for a fair share of the traveller's admiration, for the formation of the road is wonderfully skilful, and again very effectually defeats the seeming purpose of nature to divide one race of human beings from another. The passage de la Chaille, the chemin de la Grotte, the tremendous mountain to be mastered before reaching St. Thibault-de-coux, are now all as fearlessly passed over, as the carpet in my lady's drawing-room, but it is so easy in looking about to perceive what once must have been the difficulty of overpowering these obstacles, that we almost divide our admiration between the grandiose sublimity of the barrier, and the daring skill that has overcome it.

After passing Chambéry, which seems to have taken care, notwithstanding its propensity to remote solitude, to nestle itself into the snuggest little valley to be found in the neighbourhood, the traces of careful and laborious industry are visible in the vineyards and pastures which cover the hills ; but notwithstanding this, it is impossible to help feeling that much which in these latter days is considered as necessary to the ordinary comfort of existence, must be obtained there with difficulty. Though the country is evidently not thickly populated, the roads are enlivened by a sufficient number of picturesque passengers, both male and female, to satisfy over-



longing for Savoyard costume, and to furnish another proof, if any were wanting, that a montagnard population is always better worth looking at, than any other. The town of Montmélian stands well on the river Isère, and the vines around it are said to produce excellent wine. At no great distance from this little town the scenery again becomes magnificently picturesque, and continues so nearly the whole way to Lans-le-bourg. The Maurienne valley through which the road winds is locked in by barren Alps so sublime in their wild vastness, that did not their bare crags seem to promise starvation to all who ventured to nestle beneath them, one might be tempted to linger amongst them, if only for the gratification of that strong desire, which is probably common to most of us, of insinuating ourselves into rocky holes and corners where none have penetrated before. The claret wine known by the name of St. Julien is produced, however, at a village at no great distance from this barren region, and may, perhaps, serve to console the wanderers of the valley for the want of other comforts. One of the petrifying rivulets which turns every thing, over which it flows, to stone, or something like it, may form a plaything for those who may choose to repose themselves at St. Michael, for such a one flows near it into the river Arc. . . . A bright succession of cascades decorate the road between St. Michael and Modane, which from this cause, as well as from the river and the rocks by which it is bordered, is

very beautiful ; . . . but a large, staring, new-looking fortress presents itself very disagreeably to the eye as you approach Jermignon. . . . I doubt not that in time of need this might become a very precious edifice, for it is so placed as easily to rake the road in all directions ; . . . but it is hideously ugly.

Easter Sunday is a grand day for rustic costume throughout the whole Christian world, and we had the advantage of this to draw forth for us some of the hoarded toilet treasures of the Savoyard belles and beaux as we passed St. Michael. The dress of the peasants here is certainly highly picturesque ; but so *blasée* was I by the “fancy” copies of it,—that I felt it was too much so to be effective, for every youth and maiden that I looked at, appeared to me to have copied their attire, not indeed from *Le couvreur des domes*, but from the coloured lithographs of costume that we see in the windows of every print-shop in Paris. But though picturesque, the population did not strike me as being handsome. The men are for the most part under the middle size, and the frightful *goître* is very frequent.

On the preceding Good Friday we were amused at the *table d'hôte* at Chambéry by the vehement despair of many heretical guests who were of the party, on account of the rigorous rule to which the table was subjected. It was in vain that the pious landlady crossed herself, and assured us with all the zeal of holiness that she might not, could not, would

not, submit herself to the abomination of having meat cooked in her house on that most fasting of fast days. . . . It was in vain that she plainly hinted at the imminent risk of eternal condemnation incurred by those who even thought that a morsel of *rôti* would be desirable after a long journey; several rebellious spirits still persevered in imploring for eggs or a stray cold cutlet; and one of them, undertaking to answer for the whole company, exclaimed with an intensity of indignation worthy of Calvin, or old Maud Headrigg herself . . . "Mon dieu! . . . et nous! nous sommes tous Huguenots!" But villanously bad river fish being a less costly commodity than the sinful viands clamoured for, the good lady remained unmoved, and an eloquent shake of the head, or a frown that spoke unutterable horror, was all the answer she returned. I sat down to table exceedingly hungry, and rose up pretty nearly in the same condition, yet I could not help enjoying the scene, which at some moments was exquisitely comic, and the more so, as the bright black eyes of our scrupulous landlady every now and then emitted a funny twinkle, which showed that she enjoyed the jest greatly.

On arriving at Lans-le-bourg we learnt that as yet no carriage had crossed Mont Cenis, except *en traîneaux*, since the heavy snow that had fallen during the latter part of the winter, but that the road had been just reported practicable for wheels, and they were immediately about to be resumed.

At first I was sorry to hear this, as all my reminiscences of *traîneau* travelling are exceedingly agreeable, but being assured that wheels would convey us much more pleasantly, as the ascent was most awfully tedious if performed without, I contented myself with setting off, enclosed in a very comfortable coupé, to be drawn up the six thousand feet which must be mounted before Italy becomes visible, by the vulgar and uninteresting medium of wheels. But not so my son; after asking a question or two of the people of the hotel from whence we started, he set off on foot, and I saw no more of him till I discovered him standing alone amidst the snowy heights, awaiting my arrival at the top of Mont Cenis. A lady returning to Turin, which was her native city, was my only companion, and for the first mile or two she entertained me with a series of terrific adventures which had befallen sundry of her acquaintance who had ventured to cross the mountain at the same season. But the nature of the road we were traversing, and of the objects upon which we looked, was such as to make me utterly insensible to the voice of the alarmist; . . . not that I saw any thing to make me doubt the truth of her narratives . . . quite the contrary. Every step we advanced showed plainly and more plainly still the perfect possibility, to say the least of it, that a trifling swerve of the horses, or a sudden blast of wind that might in a moment render vain the clearing labours of our pioneers, would suffice to send us

headlong after the lamented friends of my fair companion. But there is a species of excitement in being carried by each successive gallery higher and higher into the clouds, that to my mind must always neutralize the sensation of fear, or rather convert it into an emotion of the most delightful kind, produced by a mixture of real sublimity, fanciful mystery, excited curiosity, and positive atmospheric exhilaration (ten thousand times more enjoyable than that of champagne), which renders it both morally and physically impossible to look soberly up the mountain's side, and down the mountain's side, exclaiming the while, "Oh, me! . . . I am afraid!" . . . As to attempting to describe to you the sort of view over the mountains and the valleys of Savoy, which you get as you crawl up the snowy side of this tremendous Alp, it is out of the question; your own imagination will probably suggest a much better idea of it, than any to which I could give birth by the puzzling medium of words. Yet, after all, it is more, I think, from the manner in which we look upon this view, than from the view itself, that the charm arises. It must surely be better still than looking down over the little balcony of a balloon, for, alter but for an instant, the angle in which you are turning your eye, and you find yourself half buried, as it were, amidst wreaths of snow, beneath a heavy canopy of drooping pines. . . . And then again look forth, and you may easily fancy that you are suspended in air above the lessening world on

which you are looking down, . . . . A variety this, certainly not to be enjoyed in a balloon.

Napoleon has the honour of having rendered this route perfectly safe and commodious; along that part of it which is the most liable to danger from storm and avalanche, he caused to be erected a number of little inns, or houses of refuge, sufficiently near each other, to prevent, if any thing can, any fatal danger from passing through galleries of snow often nine or ten feet high on each side of the narrow road. As I moved on I amused myself by passing my hand along this dazzling wall, through the window on my side of the carriage, and my companion, had she been so minded, might have done the same on the other. As long as the road continued to zig-zag up the side of the mountain, by its six successive galleries, and by a *chaussée* as unlike as possible to the "flinty roads of Savoy," alluded to by our sentimental traveller—as long as this part of our progress lasted, the beauty of the downward view, and the strange delight ever felt, as we approach nearer and nearer still to the regions of pure and serene air of which Milton sings—as long as this lasted, neither the snow, nor the giddy precipice, could suggest any ideas sufficiently terrific to check or lessen in any degree my extreme enjoyment; but on reaching the horrible plain over which the road passes for five or six miles after attaining its highest point, the aspect of the world around is appalling. Sublime too, it certainly is,

but it is the sublimity of the Dantescan school, and every feature of it, except indeed the kindly little roof of refuge, that meets the eye from time to time, might be introduced with very powerful effect into a fuller description of an icy hell than that by which the *Inferno* sets us shivering:—

Non fece al corso suo sì grosso velo  
Di verno la Danoja in Austericch  
Nè il Tanai là sotto 'l freddo cielo,  
Com'era quivi; che, se Tabernicch  
Vi fosse su caduto, o Pietrapana  
Non avria pur dall' orlo fatto cricch.

Whether *cricch* might have ensued if Mont Blanc had fallen upon the icy summit of Cenis, I will not pretend to decide; but my imagination has no power to paint a keener intensity of frozen desolation than meets the eye on entering on the plain of St. Nicolo. The very absence of the precipice, which, till then, has constituted the only danger of the daring path, adds to the frightful desolation; for, once entered upon this colourless desert, the eye wanders in vain to seek some visible outlet from it. No downward glance can then show a world smiling in all the brightness of spring, and ready to receive again the wilful wanderer who has turned from Nature in her most bewitching mood, to struggle with her when frowning in all the bitterness of her fearful strength. In looking round and seeing nothing but snow, snow, snow, it is difficult not to fancy oneself lost; a trackless elevation, here and there, so dazzling on the sunny

side as almost to blast the sight, is the only object that varies the grim uniformity, and *there*, we know that death lies crouching beneath the bright smooth surface. The very act of breathing is an operation that differs strangely from what it was a few thousand feet below; and, in short, the mind of the traveller must be constituted of very firm materials, if it can resist the united force of truth and fancy in passing over the plain on the top of Mont Cenis: . . . but to attempt any detailed description of it would be rash indeed. . . .

“ Non è 'mpresa da pigliare a gabbo,”

\*                    \*                    \*                    \*                    \*

“ Nè da lingua che chiami mamma e babbo,”

and having no right to invoke the ladies,

“ Ch' aiutaro Anfione a chiuder Tebe,”

I will pass on in silence, only begging you not to believe that because I say no more about it there is, therefore, no more to be said.

The sights which meet the eye after passing the Hospice, and fairly beginning the descent into Piedmont, might really justify the school of melo-dramatists in declaring that it is from nature they draw the inspiration which teaches them to produce those *fortepiano* effects of contrast by which they love to startle the world. The transition from a torture-chamber to some silvery temple filled with roses, lilies, and dancing girls, is not more violent than that from the frozen plain of St. Nicolo, to the



sunny slope down which you glide to Susa. Even the traces of frost which follow you for a mile or two after the descent begins, only increase the brightness and the beauty. Two or three different torrents which issue from the mountain, traverse again and again the track over which the magnificent road is made, and these, being partially ice-bound, as they pour forth from the picturesque arches of stone thrown over them, present, as you look upwards, downwards, and onward, innumerable pieces of frost-work, stupendous in size, yet delicate as a filigree of silver. It is with a very delightful sort of triumphant feeling that one looks for the first time upon the sunny landscape of Italy. . . . Were it less bright than it really is, it would be hailed with cordial welcome after the journey from Calais to Lyons, to say nothing of the mountain-barrier from which we descend upon it, like so many conquerors; but besides all this, there is a positive and a powerful charm, in at once recognizing the form and colour of objects which art has made familiar to the mind, as types of all that is most characteristic in the land. This is quite enough to render the drive to Turin one of great interest, though in entering upon the plain it is necessary to look back in order to gaze upon the objects which give sublimity to the region. It was night before we reached this city, . . . and as yet I have seen nothing of it, having employed myself in scribbling while waiting for a late breakfast.

## LETTER II.

Position of Turin.—Atmosphere.—The Po.—Queen Christina.—  
 Palace of the King.—Ornamented ceilings.—Theatre.—Collec-  
 tions of pictures.—Egyptian museum.—Architecture of Turin.—  
 Morning light.—Superga.—Library.—Rousseau.—M. Valery.  
 —Hospitals.—The Valentino.—Gymnasium.—Vegetation.—  
 Runner.—Dress.—Beards and Moustaches.—Royal ordinance.

Turin, April 15th, 1841.

PERHAPS of all the cities I have seen, Turin is the most beautifully placed, being situated on a fair and fertile plain, watered by a noble river, surrounded by a circle of majestic mountains, and blessed by an atmosphere of such exquisite purity, that every object is brought out to view with tenfold greater effect, as far as clearness of vision is concerned, than any which can be hoped for on the northern side of the Alps. I remember when in Flanders and Holland being greatly struck by the wonderful truth with which Cuyp, and Paul Potter had given the effect of their national atmosphere, and it was then only that I became also fully aware of the mimic power of Rembrandt's palette in landscape; so now, and now only, do I render justice to the fidelity of Claude Lorraine. It is only by looking through the same medium through which

he looked, that the pure and glowing sunshine in which he delighted to dress his pictures, is found to be as true as it is beautiful. Yet this atmosphere, all bright and vapourless as it is, has no exemption from hurricane and storm, nor is its influence on the lungs at all more favourable than that of more cloudy skies. I have seen an extract from the statement of a certain Dottore Berliini, declaring that pulmonary affections of the most fatal kind are frequent at Turin, and that in the autumn intermitting fevers are also common. Violent storms of hail are so frequent in the neighbourhood, that an insurance company, under royal patent, has been formed for the purpose of securing individuals from ruinous loss from this tremendous visitation. So enormous are the hail-stones which fall, and so violent the impulse with which they reach the earth, that not even the sturdy stalks of Indian corn when at maturity, can resist it;.... whole fields of it are levelled to the ground, and even if some stalks remain standing amidst a crop thus visited, they are shorn of their leaves and grain. One or two pretty sharp attacks of earthquake are also recorded as having made Turin tremble, morally as well as physically; and another proof that the bright climate does not ensure the inhabitants from the hostility of the elements is, that the Po occasionally rises with such sudden violence as to threaten destruction to everything that opposes it. The autumn of 1839 witnessed

one of these inundations ; and that the calamity has made itself severely felt in days of yore, may be gathered from Tasso, who says,

“ Non empie umile il Po l'angusta sponda  
Ma sempre più, quant 'è più lunge al fonte  
Di nuove forze insuperbito abbonda

\* \* \* \* \*

Che guerra porti, e non tributo al mare.

While Ariosto, though he uses no image so majestic as that contained in the last line above quoted, describes the same out-breaking of the Po with still more graphic effect, when he says,—

“ Con quel furor che 'l re de' fiumi altero  
Quando rompe talvolta argini e sponde,  
E con le sue capanne il gregge intero,  
E coi cani i pastor porta ne l'onde,  
Guizzano i pesci a gli olmi in su la cima  
Ove solean volar gli augelli in prima.”

The Doria Riparia, which flows into the Po at no great distance below Turin, lends its waters to irrigate the lands through which it passes, even in the driest seasons, as, unlike the generality of Italian streams, it does not become “ un torrent sans eau ” as soon as the summer sets in ; nor does it destroy one day what it has helped to fructify the day before, which is another bad trick to which the rivers of the “ dolce paese ” are said to be greatly addicted, as the rapid angle at which it falls permits not such masses of pebbly deposit to

remain in its bed, as to render it too shallow to contain the accidental increase of its waters.

Having contemplated with very vivid admiration and delight, the general aspect of the city, we set about the traveller's hardest work, namely, the examination, in detail, of the inside and outside of the buildings most remarkable in any and every way. As beyond all doubt a splendid palace is fair to the eye, and agreeable in many ways to the imagination, it is difficult to trace the causes of the weariness of spirit which inevitably supervenes on the very mention of setting forth for the purpose of examining their treasures, . . . . that is to say, when these treasures do *not* consist of pictures or statues, but merely of reiterated suites of rooms, . . . . a little larger, or a little less large, . . . . of velvet, satin, or-molu, and looking-glass. I would, nevertheless, by no means advise any one to yield to the lazy feeling, and leave the palaces of the earth unseen. It would be tearing an illuminated page from the history of life, thereby leaving us ignorant of the perfection to which the skill of man has carried the art of decoration. It is true that there may be homely-looking pages of unornamented text in the said history, which may considerably out-value the illuminations. . . . But a scholar should be acquainted with both. We were in great danger, however, of losing whatever pleasure or profit the royal residence of Turin could afford us, for it is only shown to strangers when

the royal family are absent, and our *laquais de place* informed us, upon our setting forth in quest of sights, that, "most unfortunately for us," his majesty and all the royal race were in residence there, and that it would consequently be impossible for us to get admission to one of the most magnificent palaces in the world! But fortune favoured us by a lucky accident. As if on purpose for the gratification of our curiosity, it so chanced that the illustrious errant princess, Christina of Spain, reached Turin on this identical day. At the distance of a few yards from our hotel, some circumstances connected with this arrival reached our attendant, who turned back to us, radiant with joy, and overflowing with congratulations, because this loss, which he considered as the greatest which could befall a traveller, was likely to be avoided. It seems that the king, queen, and princes, having rather suddenly heard of the royal lady's approach, had deemed it "wisest, discreetest, best," to set off before her arrival.

The suite of the Spanish queen was not very superb, consisting only of two carriages, in the first of which was seated herself and another female, and in the second, five male personages, whether *maîtres*, valets, or both, report said not.

What halt the newly-absolved penitent might have made in the fair city of Turin, had matters been otherwise arranged at the palace, it is impossible to say; as it was, she did not leave her

carriage; breathing the air of the Sardinian capital only long enough to allow of a relay of horses being attached to it. . . . And so, we saw the palace, and a splendid palace it is, the state apartments being fitted up, as to their ceilings, windows, and doors, with a degree of elaborate and rich magnificence which I do not remember to have seen equalled elsewhere.

The official who conducted us through the building, appeared to dwell with great satisfaction on the munificent patronage of art, for which his royal master was distinguished; and there seems, in truth, very sufficient cause on which to found such a reputation, if all the objects pointed out as having been collected at his majesty's private expense have been so brought together. The armoury, which is admirably arranged, and which forms in its way as striking a *coup-d'œil* as can well be looked upon, is the result, we were told, of seven years research through all parts of the world; and many an active and skilful agent, and with purses well-lined too, must have been employed to effect it. There is, perhaps, some little incongruity between the contents of this beautiful gallery and the gallery itself. A ceiling of more sober effect, with frescoed mimicry of stone, would have better suited the display beneath it, than the new and gorgeous painting and gilding with which it is now vaulted. But it is ingratitude and treason to fix a quarrel upon any ceil-

ing in the royal palace of Turin ; for of all the princely dwellings under which I have yet stood, none can, in this respect, approach in splendid effect to that of the King of Sardinia. I speak not, of course, of those which have been strangely made the ground of admirable pictures . . . . that is a thing apart. Guido, Michael Angelo, Rafael, *and so forth*, are not to be had for the asking ; and the splendour I am now speaking of, proceeds from the humbler arts of carving and gilding, and may, if fashion so wills, be brought in aid of decoration whenever apartments are sufficiently lofty to admit it. I remember having been told at Vienna that, till Italy has been visited, it is impossible to conceive the gorgeousness to which this part of internal architectural magnificence can be carried, and this might be said with truth, were the royal residence at Turin the only instance to be shown in support of it. I have seen, both in Germany and France, much that is beautiful in this way ; but, excepting, perhaps, in the “golden chamber” at Augsburg, nothing approaching the majestic height, and nothing equal to the union of splendour and elegance which this Piedmontese ceiling displays. We have decidedly blundered in banishing, as we have done, this species of decoration from even our most costly dwellings. It certainly affords *un moyen de plus* of lavishing upon the objects which surround us what is beautiful to the eye. But in these days of renovated



*cinquecento* magnificence, there seems an excellent good chance of coming back to this and many other right royal embellishments.

\* \* \* \* \*

We saw a pretty piece, "*Il Secreto*," very well played at the Carignano last night. The Theatre-Royal is open only during the Carnival, or upon some especial occasion of command from the court . . . . and the said theatre-royal must indeed be splendid if it excel in magnificence, as much as it is said to do in size, that which we have seen, for it is described as being capable of holding twelve hundred more persons. This secondary theatre would accommodate, I should suppose, as many as our Opera House . . . . It is somewhat of the same form, and very elegantly ornamented; but to discover this is really a matter of research from the darkness which involves every part of the house, except the stage.

Of the picture galleries of Turin I can tell you very little; it is not accounted rich in private collections; and as our stay in the town was to be but short, we gave up the idea of hunting them out. We found the royal collection, however, considerably richer than we expected, for I know no work on the subject in which it makes any great figure; but did it contain no other claim to notice than its Rembrandts and Vandykes, I should consider it a very precious gallery. One reason why it has not hitherto figured in books of travels to the

extent which it now deserves, is easily explained by the fact that some of the most valuable paintings attached to the Sardinian crown have been recently removed from Genoa to Turin. . . . And this fact is worth the attention of picture-loving travellers, not only to prevent their being disappointed when they arrive at Genoa, but also to prevent their overlooking well-known treasures which they expect to find there, while they are actually within their reach at Turin. One of these, is the famous Paul Veronese, of the Magdalen at the feet of our Saviour. There is not much else, I think, in the way of fine arts to enchant an eye impatient and expectant to behold something finer in what is fine, than it ever saw before. The Egyptian collection, however, is most admirable, and not only raised my ideas of Egyptian art most wonderfully, but created a degree of interest for the venerable race, considerably less vague, distant, and indistinct, than any I had ever felt before. This collection is a *palpable* gloss upon Wilkinson, and few things would be more agreeable than being permitted at leisure to read his learned, accurate, and most graphic volumes in these rooms. One should come forth from such an occupation with a sort of hand-and-glove intimacy with Pharaoh and his family, which might prepare one to set off for Rome, with the familiar feeling of paying a visit to a grandpapa.

Of architectural *beauty*, I saw but little, though there is much of stateliness, and almost of magni-

ficence. Count Alfieri, uncle to the immortal poet, appears to have been the architect to whom Turin owes some of its handsomest erections. They show an ugly old building, now a prison, called, I think, the Palazzo delle Torri, which is said to be of the sixth century. Such high antiquity might give it interest anywhere; but at Turin, where almost every thing has the air of being still growing, it is something to wonder at. Mr. Bell, in his charming book on Italy, says well, in speaking of this *aujourd'hui* sort of look in Turin, that "antiquity is to a city, what nobility is to a family, an honour which casts a veil over many defects." The bridge of the Po, with the temple-like church of the Madre di Dio beyond it, and the magnificent street which leads to it, forms the finest *coup d'œil* of the city; but it is the frame-work of Turin which constitutes its principal beauty, and though I expect that Italy will become considerably more Italian as we advance, we cannot again hope to see the marvellous effect produced by its atmosphere in full action upon a horizon of snow. When the morning light fell upon this mountain barrier, the colouring was so totally unlike anything I had ever seen before, even in the tropics, that I felt as if my senses were the sport of some optical delusion, and that I looked through a medium that had some trick in it. I have read, and heard talk about rose-coloured light, nay, have talked about it myself, in America; but such soft, liquid, rosy radiance, as I watched floating

over the white mountains round Turin, I never saw before.

There is, too, much beauty, though not of a very elevated or picturesque kind, in the scenery round the town. The noblest feature is the church of the Superga. It is a modern erection (1706), and was built, I believe, expressly as a burial place for the Piedmontese sovereigns; but its position, on the summit of the highest hill near Turin, gives it a fame and name, which handsome as it is, with its large convent annexed, it would not have obtained, had it been more lowly placed. The view from it is glorious.

Bibliomaniacal people may find very considerable satisfaction by making their way into the library of the university; for not only will they find themselves surrounded by above three hundred thousand volumes of something or other, but if they look aright they will discover MSS. in abundance, and sundry other unappreciable matters which nobody is worthy to look at but themselves.

Were I to begin now, on first setting my foot in Italy, to discourse to you much about churches, you would have, I think, very reasonable cause to be alarmed, and if I do magnanimously determine upon sparing you the description of a few of these edifices, it may be as well perhaps to let those of Turin be of the number. It may, however, be particularly interesting to you to know that the real, and true, and incontrovertible Sudorio is enshrined in

silver, adorned with much gold, and many precious stones, within the church of St. John in this city, and that consequently the worship and adoration offered to all the Sudori in every other part of the Roman Catholic world, is nothing better than idolatry.

We gave a look at the hospital of the Catechumens adjoining the church of the Holy Ghost, as being connected with Rousseau. It was here that, under the pure patronage of Madame de Wasens, he was received in 1728, for the purpose of being converted to the Roman Catholic religion, and here, after the residence of one month, he in his sixteenth year renounced the faith of the Reformers. We were indebted for the gratification afforded by this sentimental visit, to the guide-book of M. Valery, who, in speaking of the abominations of this place of recantation, observes, that notwithstanding the objectionable manner of Jean Jaques' conversion, it was nevertheless a circumstance productive of most important literary advantage . . . . inasmuch as Rousseau retained his Catholicism till his fortieth year, and was probably indebted to it for his escape from the bad taste of the Reformists ; . . . . and then he very tersely adds, that Rousseau is the *only* Protestant writer of imagination. Whether this critical compliment to the Church of Rome be the result of M. Valery's extensive poetical researches, and of the fine judgment which enabled him to profit thereby . . . . or arises purely from his reve-

rence to the Holy See, I will not attempt to determine ; . . . but in either case it is impossible not to admire the unflinching courage with which this comprehensive *dictum* is advanced ; . . . nor can I read with indifference a sentiment which I find close at hand in the same volume, showing the author to be as firm in loyalty, as in religion. When speaking of the equestrian portrait of Louis the Fourteenth, in the audience chamber of the king's palace, he says, "This portrait presents the same absurdity as the statue in the Place des Victoires . . . the horse is restive, and nothing ought to be refractory under Louis the Fourteenth."

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There are several noble public institutions here ; the hospital of St. Louis is said to be one of the best ordered, and most perfect in its regulations in the world, and the detailed account given of it in a recently published history of the city fully justifies this praise.

My son and I, as is our usual habit go where we will, took several exploring rambles near the city. One of these brought us to the royal castle, as it is called di Valentino. It is now, I believe, a barrack, but was formerly the well-loved residence of Christina of France, daughter of Henry IV. and Mary of Medicis. She survived her Savoyard husband, Amadeus I. many years, and governed the country as regent. Many strange stories are extant concerning this illustrious lady ; and it is said that the

position of this palace, which borders closely on the Po, and moreover contains an internal staircase leading to the river's brink, enabled her to carry on very systematically a series of adventures, which had probably better remain behind the veil so mysteriously thrown over them, than be exposed to the vulgar eyes of the people.

Close beside this mouldering record of romantic scandal, is a spot which appears dedicated to all sorts of gymnastic and athletic exercises, and we amused ourselves in watching the marvellous feats of a young man who appeared to be a professor, and to be giving lessons. I never saw anything that appeared to me more extraordinary, than the manner in which he ran round the rail that enclosed the space within which his exercises were performed. This rail was at the distance of nine feet from the ground, and certainly not above six inches wide . . . . to the eye it looked much less, yet along this giddy line this human squirrel ran, apparently with as little heed to his steps, as if he had been traversing the floor of a ball-room. . . . The exercise, however, being varied by frequently dropping himself down, suspending himself for an instant by one hand, and then alighting on the ground, from whence he sprung again and recovered his perilous path, in a manner that to me had very much the appearance of magic. Several pupils were gazing at him, while he set himself to perform these various feats of agility, but as he proposed not to any of







them that they should attempt to follow him in his airy promenade, I came to the conclusion, that he was not only a professor of gymnastic exercises, but a public performer also, in the tumbler line (tumbler "*à non*" tumbling) for which his countrymen are, beyond all others, celebrated.

There was something unusual to our eyes in the aspect of the vegetation round Turin, and therefore it was, I think, that we exclaimed "how beautiful!" . . . . for I greatly doubt whether mulberry and olive-trees, can really compete in beauty with our oaks and elms. But the love of looking upon what is new, is no proof of bad taste; it only shows that we are susceptible of the pleasure of having our minds awakened to fresh impressions and new trains of thought; and, therefore, I forgave both my companion and myself, though we did express a prodigious deal of satisfaction at seeing ourselves surrounded by what elegant travellers call "groves of mulberry and olive," notwithstanding the undeniable fact that one park group of our native forest-trees, in point of graceful richness of foliage, is worth whole acres of such ragged groves.

Could I have been sure that by examining that remnant of a ruin which still exists of the fortress which formed the prison of "the Iron Mask," I could have made any discoveries respecting the mystery which so particularly tormented my childhood, I certainly would have made a pilgrimage to Pignerol, which is only a few miles distant from Turin, but

not having this hope, I determined against the expedition, not choosing to deduct the time it would take from the days we had allotted to the Sardinian capital. Instead of this we drove about the town in all directions, dutifully doing everything our *laquais de place* commanded, in order to “*insense*” us, as the north-country people say, of, by, or with, its beauty and magnificence. While making this tour our coachman stopped short in the middle of what looked like a sort of *boulevard*, handsomely planted with trees on both sides, and forming a charming promenade for carriages, horsemen, and *piétons*, for the purpose of letting us see a man who, as it seemed, was running a race with himself, for the amusement of a multitude of people who were assembled to look at him. How the poor fellow got paid I know not, for I saw no collection made; but he appeared, as he passed and re-passed us twice, exceedingly out of breath, exhausted, and distressed. He was dressed in a very light but fantastical sort of garb, and the blast of a trumpet announced the beginning of the course, and the end of it. We found, afterwards, that this strange unmeaning sort of exhibition had been advertised in the morning through all parts of the town. In what its attraction consists, I cannot imagine, as the crowd was too great to admit of my eyes following the panting runner for more than a few yards.

Nothing in the general aspect of Turin struck me more forcibly than the very peculiarly quiet and or-

derly air of its inhabitants. In leaving London for Paris, one passes, by rather a violent transition, from among a quiet-looking population, all of whom, in their different stations, are clothed according to the custom of the age and country, to the midst of another population where every individual (among the males, and excepting, perhaps, quite the higher classes,) seems to be habited as if he were preparing himself to enact a part in some melodramatic performance. Nay, I am not sure but that this *historique* population might answer this remark in the words of Hamlet, and exclaim,

“Seems, madam ! nay, it is ; I know not seems ;”

for it is likely enough that these gentry, who, from their remarkable attire, contrive to make so conspicuous a feature in the French metropolis, may, in truth, be one and all actually preparing themselves to enact parts that have as little to do with the every-day business of ordinary life as any melodrama could furnish. But, be this as it may, the long beard, the fierce moustache, the lanky locks of some, the curly bush of others, and the dirty aspect of all . . . together with the strange varieties of hats, caps, jackets, and frocks, all speaking fearfully of some mysterious meaning, impress the mind of an English traveller with feelings half grave, half gay, and make him feel most thoroughly that he is not at home. Were the said English traveller, after gazing at

this comical spectacle for a time, to turn his horses' heads whence they came, and hie him back again to London, he would feel in no way surprised at again finding himself among the sober realities of ordinary existence. But when, instead of this, he dashes on, on, on, farther and farther a-field, it does startle him to find himself suddenly in the midst of a population, in costume at least, if not in physiognomy, exceedingly like his own, and no more resembling in appearance the brilliant spirits of young France, than a sober doctor of laws does a rope-dancer. Such was the effect to me upon entering, or rather upon driving and walking through the streets of Turin.... I almost fancied I was surrounded by Englishmen.... Neither beards nor moustaches were to be seen; and instead of telegraphic hats, which announce across the whole Place Vendôme the approach of a republican, the most uniformly neat collection of ordinary-shaped beavers were walking about that I ever remember to have seen anywhere. Before we left Turin, however, we made acquaintance with a gentleman, to whom we ventured to communicate the above observation. "Yes," said he, "the fact is exactly as you state it.... and it is by no means the effect of accident."

"How?" said I.... "do the men of Turin really pay us the compliment of wishing to imitate our national air?"

"No," he replied, with a smile, "it is not exactly

that.... You are not aware, I perceive, that moustaches, beards, and bushy hair, are forbidden here by *state authority*; and a *jeune France* hat or *froc*, would be instantly attended to by the police.... Whether," he added, "the reform goes deeper than the skin I will not venture to say.... but, at any rate, one great object is gained, we look as little like *gamats de Paris* as possible."

Another general observation suggested by our rambles through Turin, is relative to the language, which strikes the ear as wonderfully little like Italian. The Piedmontese dialect, as it may still be heard in the streets, shops, and markets of Turin, contains, as we were told, a very curious mixture of words, left as relics by all the barbarians who at different times have traversed it. Another general feature is the multitude of priests, who here bear a much larger proportion to the rest of the population, than I ever saw them do elsewhere.... even in Belgium.... and yet another, is the Composite style, if I may use such an expression, by which the city has attained its present size, showing, as in a map marked by coloured lines, the various additions produced by the increase of the kingdom of which it is the capital.

And now I think I have told you all that a three days' residence has taught me to know about Turin. So, adieu!.... to-morrow we set off by Vélerno for *Genoa la superba*.

## LETTER III.

Asti.—Alfieri.—Alexandria.—Plain of Marengo.—Buried monument of General Desaix.—Genoa.—Duomo.—Sunday dresses.—Genoa better to look at than live in.—Opera.—Fanny Cerito.—Row across the gulf.—Breakfast at Voltri.—Groups of boys.—Spinola villa.—Tremendous row back.—Villa Negri.—Lord Byron.—Palaces.—Pictures.—Ducal palace.—Statues of straw.—Carignano bridge.

Genoa.

OUR first halt on our journey from Turin was at Asti, which we reached about mid-day. Here we dined, after having passed a couple of hours in looking about the venerable town, the most interesting object in which is the family mansion of Alfieri, wherein he was born. The huge cathedral is, I believe, of modern date; but there is a morsel of architecture here that boasts of high antiquity, namely, a part of the parish church of St. Peter, which is said to have once formed a portion of a temple dedicated to Diana.... Asti is *also* famous for its strong and high-flavoured wine.... And this very full and satisfactory account of the old town will, I hope, content you.

Our next stage was Alexandria, and there we slept, but arrived in good time to perambulate the

most remarkable parts of the city. The citadel is enormous, and shows itself magnificently . . . . But only at a respectful distance can it be looked at, as no strangers are permitted to enter within its walls. Here we were met again by the architectural labours of Count Benedetto Alfieri, the royal palace here having been built after his designs. I should doubt if his immortal nephew could have greatly relished this close relation to artistic fame, and that too so very near home . . . . For, notwithstanding the stern dignity with which this most genuine poet ever spoke of the contemptible littleness of all worldly greatness, and so forth, Voltaire himself was not a greater aristocrat. There is another great big cathedral here, but I saw nothing in it particularly worthy of admiration.

On leaving Alexandria, we entered upon the plain of Marengo, so *very* much celebrated in French history. They tell a story of some lady's having, on a fine moonlight night, pulled down the column erected to the memory of General Desaix, and *buried* it, with the most touching marks of reverence and affection. The reason assigned for this pious inhumation is, that she feared its being destroyed, either by authority or popular feeling, and thought it more respectful to consign it to an earthly grave, than to leave it standing amidst such danger. How much of truth there may be in this lady-legend I know not, but certain it is, that the memorial erected on the plain of Marengo



to the memory of the French general no longer exists,—at least, above ground.

After quitting this historic plain, we got among the mountains, or at any rate among a range of hills so called; for myself, I cannot in conscience give this most superb of names to this part of the Apennine range. The drive is, however, one of much interest, particularly to a newly-arrived *tramontana*, and, towards evening particularly, showed us some of those beautiful effects of rainbow-tinted light, which have already begun to make us understand what people mean, when they talk of the Italian atmosphere as of something made up of melted gems. I forget the name of the town at which we dined on this day, but remember an entry in the book handed to us for the insertion of our names, which amused us. Here, as elsewhere, it is usual, after inscribing your name, to subjoin your calling. A certain venerable priest had, in this manner, inscribed *vescovo* after his name, and a gentleman calling himself “Mr. Hill, of London,” in writing his name immediately below, had added, either in blunder or frolic, the word “*idem*.”

We reached this glittering jewel of a city in the twilight of a lovely evening, and can never forget the impression which the drive from the point where we first reached the shores of the Mediterranean, produced. I remember few things so striking as the views caught as you traverse the beautifully curved line which leads from Sestri di

Penante to the city. But on reaching the town itself the charm is in a great degree lost. The very narrow streets and the very lofty houses, produce an air of gloom and closeness which contrasts very disagreeably with the radiant approach to it. But Genoa is not to be judged by this first nearly dark drive through her streets. She has not obtained the cognomen of "*La superba*" for nothing; and of this we became very satisfactorily convinced as soon as we stepped forth from our hotel on the following morning.

It was Sunday, and all that gay *contadinesco* costumes could add of beauty to the sunny brightness of this most brilliant-looking of cities, was displayed in the churches and public promenades. On first entering the Duomo, I was quite startled by what seemed to me the exceeding richness of the female dresses which crowded the aisle. . . . And though, on closer examination, I was so far *désenchantée* as to discover that veils which I had mistaken for the most splendidly-embroidered silk, were, in truth, nothing but very bright and showy-coloured large cotton shawls, the general effect still remained, and was singularly brilliant and picturesque. Every female head is enveloped, rather coquettishly than closely, in these large, square, gaudy draperies, which, falling low over the figure, produced as they stood, or knelt, by hundreds in the spacious aisles, one of the most richly-coloured living pictures that I ever saw . . . . a first-rate

Paul Veronese. During the course of the day, however, which was spent in assiduously driving out and walking in every direction where we were most likely to see these brilliant holiday-folks congregated, I observed that the class of females above the cotton shawls, but beneath the Parisian bonnets, had their pretty heads wrapped in flowing draperies of delicate white muslin. These were all *sedulously* arranged, and, for the most part, with very perfect good taste; and as, on this holy-day, they were all in a state of spotless purity, the effect was exceedingly delicate and pretty.

I failed not to look, with as much attention as was civil, at the faces thus shielded from the eye both of the sun of Heaven and the sons of men; but though I discovered many that were exceedingly picturesque, and well rewarded the trouble I took to get sight of them, I could not help thinking that I remembered a multitude of young English heads of the same class, which if clothed in the same pretty style, instead of the stiff bonnet that belongs to us, would have been even lovelier still.

I have promised to be merciful to you about the churches, and shall, therefore, not attempt to enter upon any description whatever, of those of Genoa. Let it suffice you to know, *en grand*, that they are many in number, large in size, and rich in decoration; but that not the biggest, nor the best among them, can be compared in beauty, or as to the power of elevating the mind, to any of

our second-rate Gothic cathedrals. It is not, however to its churches, though many among them must be accounted, Roman-catholically speaking, as very rich . . . . (witness the *sacro catino*, and so forth) that Genoa owes her splendid *individuality* among the cities of the earth. It is to her palaces, with their marble terraces, their hanging-gardens, and their stately halls. . . . it is to the unspeakable brightness of the sea that bathes her shore, and of the sky that is her canopy. . . . of the bold hills that are her buckler to the north, with the innumerable villas, which seem to smile upon her from among them. . . . And, though last not least, it is the overflowing fertility of the golden garden in which she lies basking, with its orange-groves, its lemon-trellises, its myrtles, oleanders, and pomegranates, which altogether give it an aspect and a charm, that would be sought in vain elsewhere.

But, notwithstanding all this, I would rather look at Genoa as a sight to be seen than as a home to live in . . . . for though busy as a port, its splendid dwellings look lonesome, and quiet, even to dulness. The sound of a carriage is so rare, that you turn round to look when you hear it, and even on the magnificent ramparts, which certainly form one of the most beautiful promenades in the world, we saw few persons either on horseback or foot, or in carriages. A few lounging young priests were visible both here and in the beautiful public gardens; but these, with abun-

dance of children and nursery-maids, were very nearly all the "company" we met. If one half, however, of the splendid palaces which we saw, are inhabited, there must be abundance of fine folks here, if we did but know where to look for them. . . . But it may be, that early as was the season, the city may already be considered as too hot, and its most wealthy and independent inhabitants may already be enjoying the cooler air of the beautiful villas which so thickly stud the hills.

We heard one of Mercadante's operas performed in a very splendid theatre, which ranks, I think, as third in size among the enormous theatres of Italy, Naples and Milan only being larger. The house was very well filled, and so greatly had I been struck by the extraordinary stillness of the streets, that I felt astonished at seeing so many human beings congregated together. The orchestra was pretty fair, but the singing very indifferent; the singing galaxy which shines upon us in London and Paris, is an unfortunate preparative for all other operas. The best part of the performance was the dancing of the pretty Fanny Cerito; and her merit seemed to be highly appreciated; for after her last dance was finished, she was six times recalled to receive the noisy acclamations of the company.

Being determined to enjoy the justly-vaunted spectacle of Genoa, as seen from the sea, we rose one morning early, in order to breakfast at Voltri, hoping that we should be able to get back before

the sun was high enough to shed "intolerable day" upon the waters of the gulf. Nothing could be more delicious than our early row, and well does the view it showed us, merit all that has been said of it;—

"Ecco ! . . . Vediam la maestosa immensa  
Città, che al mar le sponde, il dorso ai monti  
Occupa tutta, e tutta a cerchio adorna."

I really think it is impossible to speak of the beauty of this scene hyperbolically; I know of no words expressing beauty, splendour, and majesty, that are strong enough to do it justice. And then the medium through which it is seen ! . . . Where are the words that can convey the slightest idea of it, to those who know it not? Most surely I find them not in my vocabulary, and yet, did I push such verbal power as I have to the utmost, I doubt not but you would think the picture overcharged, the lights too brilliant, and the shades too exquisitely transparent . . . for I am fain to confess that such colouring is almost as unlike anything you have ever seen at home, as a sunset of Claude's to the Deluge of Poussin. . . . Observe, however, that even by this comparison, violent as it is, I give not *all* the charm to the sunny *pendant* in this contrasted pair; nor could I fairly do so, with the memory of our homeward row, as fresh upon me as it is at this moment. . . . St. Anthony was scarcely more completely grilled than we were before we had re-passed the scorching gulf ! . . . And oh ! how gladly

would we then have exchanged our unmitigated sunshine, for the darkest glade in the gloomiest forest that British oaks ever formed ! It was tremendous, . . . and yet, it was only the twentieth day of April. . . . Whether any human creature ever lived upon that water on the twentieth day of July, appears to me very doubtful. However, the fault was certainly more our own, than of the climate : we had no business to linger so long over our breakfast at Voltri, nor to lounge with such luxurious laziness amidst the oranges and lemon of the Spinola villa. . . . And yet the hours so spent were well worth a little suffering. The rustic room in which we ate our breakfast of good fish, and bad coffee, had a window that hung over the tideless waves of the Mediterranean, and so strangely new did I feel the effect of watching these waves apparently advancing, yet for ever, and for ever, reaching the same point, and not an inch either gained or lost by the ceaseless movement, that I could not consent to cease my fruitless watching so early as I ought to have done. But besides this, I had another study which detained me at this same window. Immediately under it a group of nine boys, all clothed in Murillo-tinted rags, and varying in age from about twelve to five, had congregated themselves upon a heap of sand and pebbles, and during the space of two hours that I remained either at or near the window, they never changed their position ; all of them lying upon their stomachs or their

sides, basking in the sun, with their heads towards one common centre. I never witnessed a spectacle of such utterly listless idleness. Their only amusement was the picking out little pebbles, and flinging them at one another, but so tranquilly, that no quarrelling or noisy effect of any kind was the result. . . . Most certainly

“ In their warm cheeks the sultry season glowed ;”

but could this alone cause the perfect stillness of a group, all of whom were of a sex and age that I had ever seen elsewhere appearing to detest stillness, more than even painful fatigue ? Other causes must, I think, have something to do with it. They, one and all, looked in perfect health, and I could only suppose that habitual idleness had taught them to be content with this half-dead condition. Poor little fellows ! . . . Several of them were superbly handsome, with curly locks, and eyes as black as sloes. I would have given something to have seen them all busily at school.

At last, however, I made up my mind to leave the contemplation of the waves that neither ebbed nor flowed, and of the equally stagnant little boys, and we set off for the Spinola villa. But hardly had I passed the threshold of the door before I discovered that whatever else had been still, the sun had not. . . . The heat was already excessive ; and no wonder if, after we had climbed through it to the terraces, groves, and fountains of that enchant-



ing garden, we were in no haste to leave it again. The view downwards over the too brilliant gulf, seen through the mitigating shade of ilex and myrtle was magnificent, and amongst the other pretty devices of this "trim garden," I could not but admire a sleeping infant Neptune which adorned one of its fountains, and which appeared to me, as I looked down upon the unruffled sea, to be placed in a situation peculiarly appropriate. It was with the twofold pang of leaving what is delightful to enter upon what is not so, that we had spurred our intents with sufficient courage to take us down again to the sea beach, and into our awning-less boat. I had a parasol, which, however, availed me not much, but my poor companion had no shade beyond what was afforded by a London hat, and the consequence was, that as soon as we reached Genoa, he was obliged to abandon all further thoughts of sight-seeing for that day, and go to bed.

That I might not entirely lose the afternoon, I drove to see the celebrated Villa of the Marquis di Negro. The situation of the house and gardens is probably unequalled, but if a *colifichet* taste could have destroyed the effect of this, it would have been done by the present possessor. If he had but left nature a little more to herself, she would have repaid him with a lavish liberality that would have made his little mansion rich, but as it is, he has tortured and tormented her so barbarously, that she is only bounteous of her smiles, because she cannot

help it. It is on record at this singular eyrie, that emperors and kings, nay, that the pope himself, has mounted to it to look down upon Genoa and all her glories. A beautiful villa, which was the habitation of Lord Byron at the time he decided upon his fatal expedition to Greece, was pointed out to me from this spot. It was there he slept the night before he set sail for Missolonghi.

How impossible, I always feel it, to recur to this unfortunate expedition without regret!.... And how often have I thought, when meditating on the premature death of the Childe Harold, that we could "have better spared a better man!"

But here I am at the end of I know not how many pages scribbled from Genoa, without having attempted to take you into one of her palaces. Pray do not think from this that I have not been into them myself; I have mounted marble stairs by hundreds, nay, I do verily think, by thousands.... for here, as in other hot countries, it is the upper chamber that is swept and garnished as the apartment of state.... And I have traversed halls, and wandered round saloons that "I was proud to enter," and as to pictures, where could I find fools-cap enough to catalogue the multitude I have seen? On this last theme the *embarras de richesse* will often, I suspect, like some other sorts of embarrassment, lead to silence. I am as yet but on the threshold of Italy, yet I already feel the impossibility of touching on this subject without the double danger

of wearying you by saying too much, and *dissatisfying* myself by not saying enough. . . . As I really desire, as much as may be, to take you along with me, you must not hope that I shall never yield to the temptation of prosing *a wee bit* now and then on this ensnaring topic . . . for when one is honestly jotting down whatever makes the strongest impression, those that are very strong indeed can hardly fail of appearing ; however, it may strengthen your hopes of escape from hearing a hundred-times' told tale, if I proclaim to you at first setting off my *principles* on this subject. In truth they are in exact opposition to those of most other travellers ; (and this you must excuse in favour of my honesty) for whereas most people seem to think the enumeration of all the pictures they have seen, a duty, I hold such enumeration to be a grievous sin ; inasmuch as it palls the appetite for art, instead of exciting it, and truly takes the rose from the forehead of a very innocent love, and sets a blister there, making it all a rhapsody of words. Oh ! I would be loth to make you suffer, as I have done, when striving to draw in something like a distinct idea from these *catalogues raisonnées* ! . . . But the thing is impossible. It is much more easy to tell you, with the satisfactory certainty that you will know thereby as much about it as is needful, that the Serra palace has an oval saloon in it, almost entirely lined with mirrors, the interstices between these delightful repetitions of oneself being filled

up with gilding, solid enough to look like gold! . . . Well! . . . And then there are, I truly believe, at the very least, a thousand other fine rooms in the city, though none of them quite so fine as this . . . but altogether they well suffice to convince the beholder that both in wealth, and the proud display of it, Genoa might rival any city in the known world. But I admire their gorgeous rooms less than I do their marble balconies, their orange-crowned terraces, their pompous staircases, and their stately halls; for to the magnificence of all these, I have never seen any approach elsewhere, while, on the contrary, I could cite abundance of noble rooms in many countries, more brilliant in their general effect than any I have seen here, without even excepting the above-named celebrated saloon in the Serra palace . . . though we were told that this had been honoured by receiving the appellation of the "Palace of the Sun."

The palaces of Genoa, however, are hardly more remarkable or more splendid than her hospitals; and despite all the hard words that seem to have been bestowed pretty nearly on all sides as national characteristics of the Genoese, it is impossible to examine these without feeling that in the midst of all the purse-proud pomp of which they have been accused, their poor and suffering fellow-citizens were not forgotten. At the noble institution called *l'Albergo de' Poveri*, we saw one little bit of art which touched me more than anything in that line

which I have yet seen since I crossed the Alps. It is an *alto-rievo* by Michael Angelo in white marble, of a very small size, and placed against the wall in the manner of a suspended medallion; but it has a power that many an esteemed colossal work has not. The subject is the Virgin, supporting on her bosom the dead body of Christ. Were I accurately to describe the proportion between the size of these half-length figures, and that of the ground on which they are placed, the idea of something preposterously cramped and awkward, would be suggested; but, by some mystery or other, it is so managed that no defect of the kind is felt; and I remember not, either in sculpture or painting, anything finer than the contrast between the living misery of the mother, and the dead quietude of the son. It is, indeed, a master-piece.

The old ducal palace, though now no longer a regal residence, being used only for government-offices, is one of the most magnificent erections in Genoa, and carries the fancy back to the middle ages more powerfully than any other, although I believe the edifice, as it now stands, is almost, if not entirely, a *rifacimento*, the original building having been destroyed by fire, . . . but it is stately, and grandiose, in the extreme. The man who has the charge of the building, and who attended us over it, was most vehement in his abuse of the French, who he declared had done more towards the degradation of Genoa than all the other enemies with whom she had ever had to contend. The marble statues of

all the heroes of the Genoese republic, which once adorned the majestic hall, were pulled down and broken to atoms by the French Revolutionary army in 1797, and their empty niches have been filled by statues of straw, with plaster heads, the bodies being very ingeniously draped in white calico. There is something exceedingly ludicrous in the idea of this substitution, but the general effect, on entering the room, is astonishingly delusive.

One of the objects of interest in Genoa, and not the least, is that singular and bold arch called the Bridge of Carignano. . . . Interesting, in the first place, from its construction, hanging, as it does, over a huge ravine between two hills, and having houses of six or seven stories high underneath it, . . . . and in the second, from the motive assigned to the proud patrician by whom it was erected (one of the Sauli family) who, not bearing to see the commonalty of the city, fagging from one part of it to another, by means of these steep ascents, caused this imperial sort of accommodation to be erected for them.

To-morrow we start, by *vetturino*, for Pisa, and as, according to our usual mode when travelling in this manner, we purpose being very early, I shall now wish you good night.

## LETTER IV.

Extraordinary beauty of the road from Genoa to Pisa.—Ruta.—Chiavari.—Rappallo.—Sestri di Levante.—Portofino.—Borghetta.—The Bracco.—Spezzia.—Sarzana.—The Magra river.—Carrara.—Monte Sacro.—Quarries.—Pietra Santa.—Malaspina tomb.—Opera.—Arrival at Pisa.

Pisa, April, 1841.

MOST exceedingly have we enjoyed our journey from Genoa to this place; but, unfortunately for your correspondent, the beauties of this well-known road have been sung so often, that it seems like a violent effort of courage even to allude to them. Yet after all, I believe it is a very contemptible and craven fear that would enforce silence upon it. . . . For what is the worst you can say if I do indulge a little in rapturizing? not that I have attempted to delude you, let me laud the beauty of this mountain road to the very highest pitch that language can reach: . . . and that, you know, is the only reproach which an honest traveller ought to fear . . . so I will not restrain myself too painfully, if the fancy take me of telling you how very much more beautiful it is than anything you ever saw in your life. . . . In sober truth, it is *astonish-* beautiful. The road itself, as you catch it

at intervals before you, like a chain suspended along the undulating breast of the Apennine, is a wonder of engineering art, and courage; for it leads with positive ease, as well as with perfect safety, through rocks, over mountains, and along the side of precipices, which, to any but bold and skilful men, must have been deemed impassable. And just imagine the effect of such a road as this, with the brightly-smiling Mediterranean following you on one side, while, on the other, the waving Apennines, sometimes clothed, and sometimes bare, sometimes smooth, and sometimes rough, but ever glowing in their eternal sunshine, rise high, high above you, as if trying to kiss the heavens that look down upon them so kindly. But perhaps the sweetest spots of all, are those where the curving shore forms a little bay, not large enough, it may be, to shelter above a dozen fishing-boats at a time, but where the favourite breeze, mildest where all is mild, is alone permitted to blow upon the happy slope that rises round it . . . . for there you see such teeming luxury of vegetation, as unseen, it is, I think, impossible to imagine. . . . Oh! if I could but take a few yards square of that soil, and that atmosphere, and transport them to my English garden! . . . . How I should laugh at all my fine neighbours' hot-houses! . . . . But neither could I bottle sun-beams to ripen cucumbers, nor yet bear away with me any of that mysterious, light, insignificant-looking stuff, called vegetable mould. There is one thing



however, which, I thank the gods! I have brought away with me, and that is the recollection of having counted thirty terraces, rising in beautiful order towards the sky; each one glowing along its graceful curve, with all the products of the earth, that could most justly boast themselves the children of the sun . . . . Oranges, lemons, figs, vines, olives, all placed as if in an orchestra, to raise their voices together in a choral hymn in praise of Nature.

At Ruta it is necessary to halt for a few moments for the purpose of looking back upon Genoa; for if you miss doing so, it is not very probable that the loss will ever be made up to you as long as you live. There are no more pictures composed of the Mediterranean, Genoa, all its villas, and their back-ground of Apennines. . . .

I don't know that there is anything very particular to detain you at Chiavari, unless you wish to seat yourself in one of the remarkably-pretty light chairs for which the town is famous, and which are exported, we were told, to all parts of the world. The melancholy fact that *lepers* are still to be found here, will, however, rather impel one to leave it as quickly as may be. At Rappallo we breakfasted, and then drove on to Sestri di Levante, where we passed half a day in as great enjoyment as scenery can afford. It is, like every other place on this enchanting coast, full, oh! full of beauty, and the lovely gulf of Rappallo is seen from it to perfection. The rocky point of Portofino, which forms one of its extremi-

ties, contrasts its rough outline most superbly with the pines, olives, cypresses, and chestnuts which border the other parts of it. We wandered about till it was quite dark, and to say truth, I went to bed very soon afterwards, being positively tired out with excess of looking about and admiring. The day's journey was a very short one, but if ever I go over the same route again, I think I shall go more slowly still, and perhaps make three days of it instead of one. At Sestri we again saw, on different parts of the beach, little *heaps* of six or eight children at a time, all old enough to be profitably employed, either in learning, or in labour, but all lying about in the sun, in more complete inaction and idleness than I ever watched elsewhere, except, perhaps, in the negro-breeding farms of Virginia, where the children, preparing for the southern market, are permitted to fatten in very perfect idleness.

After all I have told you of our first day's drive from Genoa, I am sure you will have no patience with me if I declare that the second was more beautiful still, and so I suppose I had better say as little about it as possible: . . . but . . . Borghetto, and the passage of the Bracco (the loftiest, I believe, of all the Apennine mountains,) is marvellously fine. The marble and granite rocks, through which the road is repeatedly cut by tunnels (*grottos*, romantic folks them call) are interesting in every way. At Borghetto we breakfasted, and I greatly be-

grudged the time so spent. It would be in much better keeping with the locality, to leave the bad coffee, and the not-too-splendid room where it is served, and refreshing yourself as you walked with dried fruits and bread, to spend the interval while the horses are baiting, in seeing all that can be seen without doors.

At Spezzia we dined. Here again is a lovely and magnificent gulf. It is said that Napoleon considered it so much finer, as a harbour, than that of Genoa, that he projected converting it into a vast naval establishment....but "for this, among the rest" he was *not* created. We passed a sunny afternoon here, as at Sestri, in the full enjoyment of that special and apart species of scenic beauty which is found on the shores of the Mediterranean. At five o'clock on the following morning we were in our queer and ugly, but singularly cosy and comfortable landau sort of carriage, and tasted the early hour to perfection, as we drove through the acacias which form the approach to the town, and then wound our way up an easy ascent to a spot that, despite all we had already seen, elicited an exclamation of delight from both of us. Here, without any bidding of ours, the driver stopped, and in a very friendly manner advised us to get out, and look about us. This was a species of advice not likely to be listened to with deaf ears, by people who, like T. and myself, hungered and thirsted for the regale that was spread out before us;

but I really fear that the good fellow will be cautious for some time to come, how he gives the like to any travellers; for having once set us loose he had the greatest possible trouble in catching us again, till at last, he seemed to give the matter up in despair, and sat down on the step of the carriage, looking as cross as his particularly agreeable features would permit him to do. I often think, when wearied by the lagging pace of tired horses, through a long stage, and *tant soit peu dégoutée*, by a villainous dinner at the end of it, that I should like to be rich enough to travel with four post-horses, to gallop away with me; an *avant courier* before, to seize upon the best rooms, and the best everything, and a *fourgon* following after, containing the means of supplying all deficiencies.... I often think I should like this vastly. But yet there are moments like those passed on the summit from whence we looked back upon the gulf of Spezzia, in which the freedom accorded by our humbler style of proceeding, seemed worth everything else in the world, and *then*, were I shut up from stage to stage by a pair of inexorable postilions, I well know that I should be crying out, very much in the style of the country mouse:—

“ Give me again my hollow tree,  
My crust of bread, and liberty!”

After passing Sarzana, where my boasted freedom was insufficient to permit climbing, as I greatly

wished, to its old castle, which is one of the hundred relics of the great Castruccio Costracani's extraordinary *fertility* in building, we proceeded along the very swampy-looking river Magra to its extremely disagreeable ford . . . and here we began to feel the difference between travelling through a country where a wealthy and enterprising sovereign like the King of Sardinia bears rule, and a little territory possessed by a personage like the Duke of Modena, who lacks either the will or the power, to render the roads through his states either very safe or very comfortable. Not even the luxurious mode of travelling I have been talking of, could render this passage of the Magra otherwise than dilatory and inconvenient, for the more horses and *fourgons* there were to pass, the longer the clumsy operation would endure. *Of course*, a widely-spreading bridge that should at all seasons keep the road clear from the troublesome uncertainty of the stream, is the obvious remedy that suggests itself to the idea of an English traveller, to whom a ford, in place of a bridge, seems hardly less strange than his fingers would be, in place of a fork; but if, under the circumstances, a bridge be impossible, this ford might surely be more commodiously arranged. If a work in the style of Voltaire's "Voyage par Terre," were written upon this part of the country, the passage of the Magra would afford an excellent opportunity for dilating upon the strangely-barbarous habits and customs of the

remote race which inhabits here.' The boat upon which you, and your carriage, swing across, is manœuvred with a degree of clumsiness that must positively be seen, to be conceived. I really believe that the engineering talents of any English urchin of ten years old, would enable him to suggest a remedy for the worst difficulties of this formidable impediment, after looking at it for five minutes.

This danger and difficulty being mastered, we proceeded to Carrara, where we breakfasted; and then set about a most highly-interesting, but somewhat toilsome expedition to its venerable quarries. The appellation of "Monte Sacro," which is given to the towering point from whence the marble of the finest quality is taken, forcibly brings to mind all that the world owes to the beautiful material on which the poetry of sculptors has been written for ages, and which is found in such nearly unrivalled perfection beneath its rugged surface. The walk from the town to the point where the quarrying is now going on passes beside a little rivulet on the banks of which sundry notes of statuary preparation may be heard. Huge shapeless blocks of marble are here reduced by sawing to the size and shape required to supply the orders received from artists. At the distance of about a mile from the town, the rough and rude ascent begins, which leads into the bowels of the Monte Sacro, and the heat of the sun was so tremendous, in a pass fearfully well sheltered from the air, and still

more fearfully exposed to the then mid-day sun, that no feeling less strong than that produced by the wish of looking at the cradle in which Michael Angelo's offspring lay, before he began their education, could have led me, perhaps I might say, could have *enabled* me, to endure it.

They "fable not" who attribute to a spot like this very great power over the imagination. I would have been scorched more rudely still, rather than have lost the gratification of looking into the snow-white chasm from whence has been drawn the material that has embodied so many glorious efforts of human genius. But oh! the marvellous manner in which extremes are sometimes seen to meet!.... After looking at the quarries with such recollections as may easily be imagined, and raised thereby my estimate of the power of man to pretty nearly the highest possible pitch, I turned to examine the mode in which the blocks of marble were conveyed down the descent which leads to the town of Carrara: the utter and entire ignorance of every species of mechanical aid, with which this process was effected appeared almost incredible, though there it was, going on before our eyes. In the first place, the approach to the quarry is among, and over, masses of marble-rock, which the labour of a score of able-bodied men for a week or two would suffice to remove for ever and for ever, leaving free the access to this *tesoro sacro*, till the slow chisel had consumed the mighty mass.

The way thus cleared, an iron rail of considerably less than a mile in length, would enable cars bearing the precious blocks, to be conveyed to the door of the sawing-mill, without difficulty or risk of any kind. Instead of this, however, this finest quarry of the world has its produce rattled down the descent, in a manner which perpetually causes the blocks to be broken; for, instead of its being an affair thus simple, it is now one of such difficulty and danger, that it is really terrible to behold. The carriage upon which the blocks are placed, is of very massive timber, rudely and very unartistically put together; to this six oxen are attached; but the number is reduced to two when the vehicle, as frequently happens, reaches some point of its progress at which it is rather permitted to drop down, than to be drawn. At these times the exertions of the men who have charge of the convoy, are really frightful, and frequently attended with dreadful accidents. In order to prevent, or impede as much as may be, the violent fall of the vehicle from one mass of rock to another, they spring, at the most imminent risk to life and limb, from one part of the rude machine to another, in order either to produce a balance favourable to the manœuvre, or else, to coerce the movements of the oxen, who are often brought into such positions as to render any ordinary mode of driving them, impracticable. The barbarous ignorance with which all this brute force is required, and applied,



has something in it truly lamentable, and very directly suggests a doubt, whether the intact purity with which his highness of Modena labours to preserve his territory from all intercourse with other races of human beings, is calculated to produce benefit to those who have the honour of calling him lord? It appears utterly impossible that this Robinson Crusoe-like style of engineering could be persevered in, were less pains taken to keep intruding eyes and blabbing tongues from the district where it is carried on. To those who are aware how low the rate of wages is in that part of the world, it may convey some idea of the toil, and difficulty of this work, to be told that the men so employed, work but for four hours in the day, and the price they receive for this, is the value of five francs. The appearance of the poor fellows, when thus employed, is really terrific. . . . The whole of the upper part of their bodies is without clothing, the skin the colour of bronze, and every muscle and every feature so distorted by the vehemence of the action they are using, as to make it exceedingly painful to watch them.

If the lamentations we heard over the accidents which continually befall the blocks of marble, be in proportion to the frequency of their recurrence, it must be evident that the price of them to the artist must be greatly increased. I remember the late Sir Francis Chantrey showing me a block of marble, with which he had provided himself, in

order to execute some princely command, which had cost him, he told me, eight hundred pounds ! This is a sum quite large enough to produce a very strong impediment to the efforts of young artists, and who shall say how much of it might be spared, if every block severed from the Monte Sacro were permitted to reach the *terra firma* of the plain unbroken, and without all the peril to man and beast above described ?

I have been told since I arrived here, that we were lucky in having no impediment thrown in our way in making this excursion, for that the researches both of English and French travellers, were looked upon with rather a jealous eye by the authorities of Modena. We probably owed our exemption from any troublesome notice while on this interesting expedition, to the humble pedestrian style in which it was made. Had carriages, horses, and *laquais-de-place* been summoned to our aid, it is likely enough that we might have met some impediment. They say that not long ago, an English gentleman choosing, for some whim or other, to make a halt in the little town of Modena, received notice from the authorities that he was required to leave the territory within twenty-four hours. The *on-dit* is, that a rather flourishing pair of moustaches on the upper-lip of the traveller occasioned the *sensation* which led to this notice ; for that the duke of Modena, either in compliment to, or sympathy with his royal father-in-

law, of Sardinia, has an aversion to the hirsute fashion of the present day, that equals his own. A sumptuary law in both countries, usually followed by summary execution of its shaving enactments, keeps the populace for the most part, extremely clear and clean from this offence; but it is supposed that his Highness of Modena thought it wisest not to meddle with any part of the beard of an Englishman, and therefore, instead of shaving, sent him the message above-quoted. Our countryman, however, took it in very good part, sending back his compliments in return, with an assurance, that as it would not take him above half an hour to reach the boundary of his Highness's dominions, he would not abuse the license granted him, by lengthening his residence within them to the extended limit so graciously granted.

\* \* \* \* \*

After refreshing ourselves with whatever was coolest at our little hôtel, we started forth again to visit the town of Carrara. It is especially interesting from the traces it still retains of the affectionate patronage of the princess Elise, who not only gave up her palace here, as an academy where young artists might study *gratis*, from the best models, but has left various other memorials of her love of art, and of the little town which seems by nature so closely connected with it. Many good sculptors have derived their birth, or education, or both, from this place, and there are

PIETRA SANTA.—DANTE.

still many *study* in full action there, which have beautiful things to show. It was here, I think, that I first began wishing for that unfathomable purse, which, as everybody knows, is necessary for the full enjoyment of a tour through Italy.

When the heat of the day became a little mitigated, we drove on to Pietra Santa, a large town with a very handsome church, ornamented with many fine pieces in *alto rilievo*. The marble pulpit is exquisite. In this church is a chapel-tomb to the Malaspina family,—a name which one cannot see without interest and reverence, recalling, as it does, the hospitality accorded by its noble possessor Marcello Malaspina, to Dante, in the days of his exile. . . . And well did he repay it, with his pen of power, which no Guelph could ever snatch from his grasp, though he might banish the hand by which it was wielded. . . . Well did he repay his generous, fearless entertainer, when he said, once, and for ever, to the world,

La fama che la vostra casa onora  
Grida i signori, e gridà la contrada,  
Sì che ne sa chi non vi fu ancora.  
Ed io vi giuro, s'io di sopra vada,  
Che vostra gente onrata non si sfregia  
Del pregio della borsa, e della spada.

PURGATORIO, c. viii. v. 124.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the evening we went to the opera, no fine scenery out of doors tempting us to wander about

till bed-time, as we had done during the two last evenings. It is a decent little theatre, and the performance, Donizetti's *Elisir d'amore*, was by no means ill performed. In the next box to us sat, I think, the very prettiest girl I ever saw. Her beauty had, perhaps, a charm for us beyond that of mere feature and complexion, for the looking at her face and figure, was like looking at a picture of Raphael, in life and movement. It was not a Fornarina though, but a Madonna; as heavenly mild, as passionless and holy; as youthfully slender, and as divinely fair, as the very loveliest of the lovely army of virgins that he has left behind him upon the earth. Indeed it was a pain to part with her!

It was despite Mrs. Starke, however, that we lingered thus at Pietra Santa, nay, and slept there, afterwards; which is precisely the very thing she tells us not to do . . . assuring us that the very inn which we selected for our repose has a pestiferous marsh in its neighbourhood. Nevertheless, the post-house thus described, proved to be a very comfortable resting-place, in which we slept soundly: and before setting-off for this place, we found ourselves able to eat an excellent breakfast; and moreover, had the gratification of reading on the walls of the hall, inscribed in golden characters, the very satisfactory statement that a great number of crowned and coroneted heads had done the same before us.

After breakfast we set off for this place, of which

I have as yet seen nothing, save the Tower, which certainly does lean most portentously.... While I have been writing to you, my son has been arranging a variety of *vetturino* matters, both past and future.... But he is now come to summon me. So adieu !

torrents, instead of showers, when it does come, but leaving more sunny days to atone for it. This is decidedly an improvement upon us. That side of the Lung' Arno which is significantly called "di mezzo giorno," was most intolerably and scorchingly hot, when we walked under its palaces yesterday, but may perhaps be an agreeable residence in winter. It was here that Lord Byron's dwelling was pointed out to us . . . . if I mistake not, in the Lanfranchi palace . . . . a huge, and certainly a noble edifice, said to have been built after the design of Michael Angelo. On the same side of the river, is a little jewel of a gothic edifice, dedicated to Santa Maria della Spina. Perhaps the surprise of seeing something perfectly gothic, standing alone in its miniature richness, amidst buildings of so different a character, might have something to do with the pleasure it caused us, and it was long before we could pass on, and leave it behind.

This morning we obtained the key, and examined it within. The beauty of the *coup d'œil* in the interior is less striking than it is without, but the detail of its treasures offers very much to admire. It is one of the things one should like to run away with, and carry home.

Of course we failed not to seek and find, if not the Torre dell' Fame, at least the spot where it stood. The exact spot still is pointed out in the Piazza de' Cavalieri, but the ruinous remnant of its walls, notwithstanding all the interest attached to

them, was removed a few years ago, to the lasting mortification of all poetical travellers, and a tidy-looking snug little dwelling has been erected in its stead. . . . I wonder whether one should sleep quietly in the room supported by the same spot of earth which umwhile sustained the floor on which groaned the wretched Ugolino and his sons? . . . . If not a sleeping, there would be a waking-dream, that would paint, rather too distinctly for comfort, perhaps, the sound of the key as it turned in the lock of the *orribile torre* for the last time, and the fearful look with which the too well-punished traitor gazed in the faces of his innocent children !

“ E se non piangi, di che pianger suoli ? ”

I did not try the experiment, however, but passed on, after giving vent to a few of those groans, which the whole civilized world has been in the habit of emitting, during the last six hundred years, whenever accident has brought to memory the story of Ugolino . . . . and that, for the most part, without any mixture of affectation whatever. Is there any other profane narrative existing on the earth, of which this can be said with equal truth? . . . . There may be some *almost* as fine ; but none so thoroughly appreciated, or so essentially popular.

And now, having told you what has disappointed me here, let us go together to the sacred corner, on which the unfading celebrity of Pisa will rest, as long as its four edifices remain above ground, let its aca-



demy dwindle as it may, its political importance wither, or its noble mansions become deserted. The "Campo Santo," though an appellation properly belonging only to the burying-ground, seems so aptly fitted to the whole locality which contains the Cathedral, the Baptistry, the Campanile, or the Leaning Tower, and the real burying-ground, that one finds the name given to it, as if belonging to them all. And truly is that majestic area a *Campo Santo*. It would be difficult to imagine anything more striking than the effect produced on the eye by this venerable assemblage of majestic buildings, "fortunate," as Forsyth happily expresses it, "both in their society, and their solitude." Perfectly apart from the town, they, one and all, seem raised for purposes so holy, that no wonder the pious age which gave them birth deemed no cost, no toil, no artistic study, and no length of time, too much to bring them to perfection. The grand cathedral, "first in honour as in place," we entered first. I wish the Italians would not call it *gothic*, for this word suggests ideas of lightness and of grace, which the massive dignity of the Pisan cathedral does not realize. . . . Yet is it a most noble structure; and cold must be the heart, and pitifully carping the judgment, which can resist the impression its glorious vastness, and its rich details, are calculated to produce on the imagination. The beautiful marble of which it is built, seems of itself a wonder to eyes unused to seeing this precious material in such un-

bounded abundance. . . . Yet I could not but wish that the arrangement of it, which is in oblong squares of black and white alternately, had been different. The effect as it is, seems more dazzling than magnificent. This church, which must certainly rank amongst the finest in the world, is, for its style, of very high antiquity, and is, I believe, regarded as a sort of pioneer in the revival of art. It was begun in 1063, and dedicated to the Virgin Mary as a national offering of pious gratitude for the victory gained by the Pisan consul, Orlandi, over the Saracens. The architects, Buschetto, and Rainaldo, were both Italians, and they have raised a monument, not only to themselves, but to the splendour and antiquity of native art, which is alone enough to place Italy in the first rank among the revivers of architectural splendour.

The bronze gates are a perfect wonder for beauty and magnificence, and when we consider their date, we, of the later days, shall find but little reason to boast of having improved in this branch of art. How very glad I felt, as I returned again and again, to look at them, that the magnanimous "army of Italy," when ravaging the country under the great immortal, did not take it into their heads to melt them down into *sou* pieces! The six columns which adorn these three wondrous doors are antique, and admirable both from their proportions and the rare marbles of which they are formed. The two lesser doors are enriched by groups cast after the designs

of John of Bologna, and some of his contemporaries, and are of great beauty. The pulpit is one of the finest in the world. From the time of the first erection of this native church, almost down to the present hour, all that successive artists could from age to age contribute to its splendour, seems to have been lavished upon it. Almost every Italian name familiar to the lovers of art, as having flourished through this long interval, is uttered to you by your *cicerone* while you pace the majestic enclosure, as having contributed to make it what it is. I would strongly recommend to any one desirous of forming an adequate idea of the proportions of this vast fabric, to mount to the gallery, if gallery the wide expanse can be called, which forms the roof of the side-aisles. Here, standing in the midst, as it were, of this prodigious congregation of columns and arches, a much stronger feeling of their multitude comes upon the mind, than when they are looked at from below.

As to entering into any detail of the pictures, statues, and *rilievi*, of this gorgeous fabric, it enters not into my head for a moment. . . . All I can do for you in the capacity of a guide, is to advise, that if you ever find yourself at Pisa, you will not content yourself with one visit, nor two either, to its Duomo, for if you do, you will come away with recollections of but a scanty portion of its precious contents.

From the cathedral, at our first visit, we proceeded to the Baptistry. Its form is very elegant

and majestic; its date nearly a century later than that of the church. Of its profuse collection of ornamental treasures of all descriptions, I can only say, that it struck me as being a sort of museum into which the piety of the Pisans sent everything they happened to find of rich and curious, that they knew not how to dispose of elsewhere. The pulpit, however, is a glory that did not come upon it thus by chance, but was formed expressly for the place where it now stands, and is, I believe, considered as one of the *chef-d'œuvres* of Nicolao Pisano. It well deserves all the celebrity attached to it, the degree of which celebrity in its own city may be judged of by the fact, that, in former years, when the denser population sent more crowded congregations thither, on the fête days, it was the custom for the authorities of the town to send an armed civic guard, to watch over its safety by preventing the pressure of the multitude upon it. The font is another marvel, both of workmanship and material, and from its central position, and magnificent size, forcibly attracts the attention, even in a temple so striking in its general effect as is this unequalled Baptistry.

The Campanile, notwithstanding its pretty spiral arcades, is to my fancy little better than a curious deformity. I like to see strange sights, as well as other people, and therefore looked, I suppose, with the usual degree of interest upon a great mass, that most unaccountably will keep standing, when it

ought to tumble down. But, notwithstanding all this curiosity, interest, and so forth, occasioned by its deformity, I heartily wished it was upright. I might have felt differently, perhaps, had I seen it performing its strange balancing feat on less sacred ground ; but standing where it does, I lamented its crippled condition exceedingly. It was quite provoking to find oneself laughing at the queer effects produced by an object making part of so majestic and venerable a whole. But such was positively the case ; for as you pass from one part of this consecrated area to another, you open to your eye the top of the edifice, while the lower part still remains concealed ; or, if you take your contemplative walk in the other direction, a contrary phenomenon appears, and the lower part of the tower presents itself, while the correctly straight line of the building from behind which you are passing, cuts it strangely in half the other way. The very shade that it casts upon the ground, is monstrous, and, in short, it is absolutely impossible to get your mind into the harmonious state of religious sublimity, befitting the scene, unless you fairly turn your back upon the leaning-tower.

Things mend a little, however, when you get into it....for first you have the gratification of testing the truth of Basil Hall's acute remark, that the direction of the apertures left in the walls by the scaffolding is sufficient to convince any one, still doubtful of the fact, that this tum-

bling tower was, at the time of its building, perpendicular. And then comes the pleasure of thinking of Galileo, who, when he was professor of mathematics in the university of Pisa, is said to have found the calamity of this tower useful to him in making observations on the fall of heavy bodies. From this tower it was that he made his first experiments upon gravity; and the knowledge of this fact came upon me as I went up the strangely-twisted stairs, with a feeling that made me almost reverence the deformity which had been so converted to utility.

The Campo Santo was the last of Pisa's four wonders that we examined. I could hardly have had sufficient forbearance to let it be so, had its beautiful interior been exposed to view, as we walked about the enclosure in which it is placed. But the exterior, though its forty-four equi-distant pilasters give the idea of a grand architectural simplicity and of great space, awakened not any impatience within me; and, till the doors were opened, and I found myself fairly enclosed within its four venerated walls, I had conceived no idea whatever of the exceeding grace and beauty of the edifice I was about to see.

Notwithstanding Mr. Forsyth's lamentation for the want of engravings of this holy spot, and of all it contains, you may take my word for it that there are, at any rate, in this our day, abundance of engravings of all sorts and sizes, that will give

you a much better idea of the general appearance of the Campo Santo than anything I can write. Mr. Forsyth exclaims, with more enthusiasm than reason, I think, "How superior these to the coarse remains of Anglo-gothic art, which our draughtsmen are condemned to search out for those mumbling collectors, who are for ever picking at the bare bone of antiquity!" I see not why the diligent inquirer into the early history of Anglo-gothic art is, of necessity, a more mumbling collector than one who seeks to trace that of the Greco-Arabo-Pisano structures (as Mrs. Starke learnedly calls them) of which we have been speaking. Both are in the highest degree interesting, and both deserve that all which diligent research can bring to light concerning them should be sought for, and made known to all men . . . or, at least, to all men who care about such matters.

Within the last few years, however, a little work has appeared from the elegant pen of Signor Rosini, (the accomplished author of "Luigia Strozzi," and some other of the best modern novels in the Italian language,) which, had it existed at the time of our somewhat caustic, but very clever countryman's visit to Italy, must have satisfied all his longings. No one should enter the Campo Santo without Rosini's little book in his hand. It leaves nothing to wish for on the side of information; and the manner in which he enters into and develops the object and design of the perishing, but pre-

cious frescoes, though exceedingly learned and elaborate, is so full of fine taste and genuine, unaffected enthusiasm as to be, particularly when standing before the subjects of it, one of the most delightful little books in the world.

On entering the sacred enclosure, whose name and fame is so familiar to us all, the first emotion is that of unmixed and unbounded admiration. The wide extent of the consecrated space, which, though open to the heavens, save the surrounding cloister, is as effectually shut in from the profane eye of the idle passer-by, as if it were a vaulted mausoleum, struck me with great surprise. I had heard of holy earth from Jerusalem, as forming the soil in which the illustrious dead of Pisa took their long rest; and as some of the books written to enlighten the minds of travellers, gravely state that, "independently of the high value that religion gave to this sacred soil, it had a physical virtue which approached the wonderful, namely, the property of consuming bodies in twenty-four hours," I really imagined that the size of the burying-ground was such, that the "fifty galleys of the republic," said to have conveyed it, might have brought enough to heap some four or five feet depth of mould upon it. But, instead of that, I found myself standing within an enclosure that not five hundred times fifty galleys, however deeply laden, could so cover. The extent having been seen and wondered at, next came the graceful



regularity, the venerable holiness, the solemn beauty of the whole. Imagine four sides of long and light arcades, forming a cloister that measures above a hundred and five thousand yards in circumference, of a most noble width, having a fine area of turf in the centre, its sides adorned with sculptured monuments, sarcophagi, and vases of every *artistique* age and country, and its walls covered with the venerable frescoes that you wot of. It is well worth while to come from London to Pisa for the gratification of standing within these walls. But I think no one will enjoy it, as greatly as it may be enjoyed, without carrying the little volume of Rosini in his hand. With such assistance as he can give, it is still easy to follow the designs of the mighty minds who may almost be said to have conceived and given birth to an art that stands side by side with poetry. The same species of veneration with which one marks the stupendous power of Dante, forming for himself a language of strength and grace, unknown before, follows the almost untaught band of Buffalmacco, of the Orgagni, of Laurati, Memmi, Anton Veneziano, Spinello, and, greatest and most inventive of all, Giotto.

Rosini says . . . . "Puo ben dirsi que gli artefici che dipinsero in Campo Santo han presa la pittura bambina, e l'han condotta sino alla piu vigorosa adolescenza,"\* a sentence which, from so accom-

\* Forsyth, who wrote his book long before that of Rosini ap-

plished a judge, is fully sufficient to justify all the devotion still given to the fading tints, and almost vanishing outlines, of these most interesting walls. He then goes on to give a little critique on the different manners and merits of the different artists, so short and pithy, that I am tempted to transcribe it. "Buffalmacco mostra nella sua rozza maniera, come di poco si discostasse dai Greci maestri. L'Orgagna, bizzarro nelle invenzioni, molto sentiva, ed ha espresso affetti bellissimi. Pieno di verità e di semplicità nelle figure e il Laurati nel solo quadro che ci ha lasciato. Il Memmi ha della grazia, quantunque pesante nelle attitudini, e nelle mosse. Spinello ha sveltezza et colore. Anton Veneziano nei resti che ancora si discoprono, ci fa sentir la malignità della fortuna che si compiacque di maltrattar più che quelle degli altri, le pitture di lui . . . E, Giotto, finalmente, nelle due storie che ne rimangono delle sei, che vi dipinse, mostra colla nobiltà de' suoi volti, colla vaghezza e naturalezza delle sue figure, col grandioso de' panni, e soprattutto colla sua maestosa semplicità, con quanto ragione detto fosse che per lui rinacque la pittura."

It requires some patience, but it is patience richly rewarded, to follow even the clear, precise, exciting description given by Rosini of each, and

peared, says, "The Campo Santo exhibits the art growing through several ages, from the simplicity of indigence to the simplicity of strength."

every of these celebrated frescoes. The figures often seem to fade, like flitting ghosts, before you; but when once you have caught the unity of the design, their faint mysterious looks become intelligible, and by degrees, you are rooted, as it were, upon the spot whereon you stand, with that fond earnestness to find out what is partially veiled, which makes so remarkable a feature in our nature.

By far the greater portion, however, of the compositions still distinctly visible on the walls of the Campo Santo were not produced by any of the artists whose names are above given, but by Benozzo Gozzoli, who came to Pisa a hundred years after they had finished their labours. Though less admirable, of course, on the score of almost originating the art, Rosini speaks of him, and of his works at Pisa, with a degree of enthusiastic admiration which gives him a higher niche in the temple of fame than has, if I mistake not, been hitherto accorded to him by English critics. He says, “*Fu ventura grandissima che Buffalmacco non progredisse oltre la terza storia del Vecchio Testamento, poichè un secolo dopo, pervenuto a Pisa, Benozzo Gozzoli, affidato a lui fu l’incarico di terminare il lavoro incominciato dal primo ; lavoro che in brevissimo tempo, e tutto di sua mano, lasciò compiuto.*” And then he quotes Vasari, who calls it, he says, “*opera terribilissima, e da sgomentare una intiera legion di pittori.*” Rosini then goes on to speak at some length of the peculiar merits of this very

rapid artist. After having given, as we have seen, honour due to Giotto and his contemporaries, he says that all they did must yield in richness of invention, in magnificence of architecture, and correctness of perspective, to the labours of Benozzo. He speaks in raptures of the variety of his scenery, of the composition of his landscapes, of the movement of his figures, of the grace and beauty of his attitudes, as well as of the “*incomprensibile soavità di fisionomia nelle teste femminili.*” . . . . And he concludes by saying . . . . “*chi non ha visitato il Campo Santo Pisano, non conosce il merito di Benozzo, che io non temero di chiamare il Raffaello degli antichi, tanto all’ Urbinate ei somiglia ; e difficilmente mi do a credere che Raffaello medesimo, quando fu in Firenze nel 1504 non s’invogliasse di giunger fin qua, per ammirarvi queste Pitture.*”

I dare not enter here into a detailed description of any of these venerated frescoes, though at this moment it would be pleasant enough to do so, with every recollection of them so fresh upon my mind, and Rosini lying beside my desk, ready to help me. But I suspect that in proportion as the writing such a description would be agreeable to me, from the distinctness of every object concerning which I should write, it would be disagreeable to you from the indistinctness of every object about which you would read. So I will spare you, though the theme is a rich and tempting one, believe me.

The marble sculptures ranged around the walls

of this matchless cloister, consist of a strange variety of subjects, sacred and profane. There are many objects in both that well repay the trouble of examination, but there is certainly something rather incongruous in the effect of their juxta-position.

At one corner of the cloister is the antique brazen Hippogriff, said to be of Greek workmanship, which was formerly placed behind the cupola on the roof of the cathedral. Why so very heathenish-looking a monster should ever have been elevated to such a place of Christian honour, I can by no means imagine. . . . If the art bestowed on its formation, be of a very high order, I stand convicted of want of taste, or want of knowledge, for I could see no merit in it of any kind. . . . But it is time that I should turn away from this fascinating Campo Santo. . . . I certainly felt through all the hours which at different visits I spent there, and they were not few, that I stood on holy ground. . . . though I do not, however, think the mould of Palestine had much to do with it. But it is one of the spots that fancy will love to linger in, and of which it is extremely disagreeable to say, "I shall never see it again."

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The fine grand-ducal farm of San Rossore is well deserving a visit, both for the sake of observing the very noble style in which the Grand Duke of Tuscany farms, and also for the opportunity it gives of seeing a numerous herd of camels, more

nearly in the condition of wild camels than any which can elsewhere be found in Europe. It is said, whether truly or not I could not feel quite certain, that the original Asiatic stock from which this herd has been bred, was brought to Pisa at the time of the Crusades, by a monk of that city. . . . A considerable number of them are constantly used in the business of the farm, but they say that the horses do not appear to like their companionship, and that they rarely find it answer to make them work together. One mode by which this singular kind of stock is turned to profit, is selling such as are the most distinguished by their size and beauty, to the agents of all the beast-fanciers in Europe, for this colony of them is so well known that all caravans are supplied from it.

We saw during an early walk this morning an *affiche* announcing the representation of Alfieri's noble, perhaps noblest, tragedy, "Saul," for this evening, with the great additional attraction of the celebrated tragic actor, Modena, in the principal character. This set us at once upon inquiring about a box. The answer we received at the box-office was, that not a reserved seat in any part of the house was left undisposed of. . . . This was very grievous, and we applied to the master of our hotel to know if any species of bribery or corruption could be put in practice, whereby we might be enabled to obtain the seats engaged for somebody else. Nothing could be more satisfactory than his reply to this

application; he was all civility, and having ascertained that we really were willing to pay whatever might be asked, (for there is but one Modena, except the reigning duke, throughout all the states of Italy,) he ventured to assure us that he should be able to manage the affair to our satisfaction. But upon this occasion we reckoned with our host to very little purpose; for after keeping us some hours in suspense, and doing, I really believe, all that host could do to oblige us, he came into our dining-room with the disagreeable intelligence that the thing was impossible . . . that *no one* could be found who would give up his box, and, moreover, that the crowd was expected to be so great, that any attempt to enter without a reserved seat, was quite out of the question. I was greatly vexed by this disappointment, but endeavoured to reconcile myself to it by remembering that I had gained thereby a little information respecting Pisa, of which I certainly stood in need; for I confess that the aspect of the town had led me to believe that instead of having several hundred persons in it, earnestly bent upon seeing a tragedy of Alfieri, the whole city could hardly have furnished a tenth so many, gay enough to think of amusing themselves at all.

So, as we could not go to the play, we set off to take another ramble, and this time confined ourselves to the south side of the river, which its high buildings keep pretty entirely in the shade.

The most striking palace on this side is that of the Lanfредucci, rendered, moreover, remarkable by the fragment of an iron chain which hangs suspended upon the front of it, above which are inscribed the words "Alla Giornata," which mean, being interpreted, "day by day." . . . But what this "day by day" means, or what the chain means, who can say? . . . Nobody that I have been able to talk to. . . . No guide-book that I have been able to read. It is very absurd to let one's fancy be awakened by such an object as this, to a degree positively troublesome. . . . But such a fool am I that I cannot get this *alla giornata* out of my head. . . . *What* was day by day? The wasting, wicked, withering effects of the chain? . . . And was it upon a lord of Lanfредucci? . . . Or was it upon some object of the vengeance of a lord of Lanfредucci? I wish that the hero of the legend had communicated either more or less, and not left the matter thus, to torment every innocent passer-by who has nothing very particular to think of, that may keep his mind from running a wild-goose chase after such a romance in the clouds as this.

Having mused upon this *alla giornata* till we were tired, we walked on to another very splendid-looking edifice, which if it had displayed the same inscription would have caused much less trouble as to its interpretation, for it was a coffee-house, and questionless all its numerous *habitués* fre-



quented it, *alla giornata*. We seated ourselves under the ample pavilion erected in front of the entrance, and before we had remained there long, the accidental civility of a gentleman who sat next to me respecting a glass of water brought for him, but unwittingly taken by me, led to the result so much oftener met with abroad than at home, . . . which means that we entered into conversation. We found him very intelligent and communicative, and by degrees he gave us a good deal of information respecting the present state of the town. By his account, Pisa is by no means so very dismal a place as it appeared to us; he confessed indeed, that the number of its inhabitants did not greatly exceed a quarter of what it had been in the palmy days of its *cinquecento* glory. He acknowledged also, but by no means in the querulous tone of a political grumbler, that strangers who settled themselves in the city, of whom, he said, there were many, particularly English, were a good deal surprised, and perhaps a good deal shocked, by the miserable state of ignorance in which they found the children of the lower classes of the people. But this, he observed, was owing to these strangers comparing the Pisan children to those of their own "happy country," and not to any comparison with the population of other towns of Italy. . . . it being much more easy to find instances of the populace being worse off, than better, than they were at Pisa. He then

told us a story of a foreign lady, I think he said she was a Swiss, who had for years been devoting herself to the improvement of the lower classes of Pisa. By his account this benevolent person, whose name, if I remember rightly, was Mademoiselle Calandrine, appears to have been as wise as kind; cautiously avoiding the giving offence by shocking the opinions, either religious or civil, of those around her, she made it so evident that her sole object was to do good, that even the priests, from whom, as a Protestant, she had in the first instance, received many rebuffs, soon seemed rather inclined to second, than oppose her efforts. If there had been a Mademoiselle Calandrine at Sestri, or at La Spezzia, I should not, I suspect, have been able to amuse myself by watching such an infinite variety of little Italian faces . . . intended by nature to express a great deal . . . expressing nothing, but absolute vacuity of thought, and the lethargic effects of perfect idleness, both intellectual and physical. Our intelligent informant told us, moreover, that this Swiss lady had been thus occupied for many years, and that the effects of her labours were very distinctly visible to all who knew Pisa well. The girls educated by her, are found to make, in every respect, the best servants; and the boys distinguish themselves in whatever business they are put to, by a superior degree of active intelligence and right feeling.

I own I should be apt to suspect from the tone of this conversation, that the education of the lower classes in this country was not in a very advanced state, for I thought the gentleman's language respecting these instructed children, was very nearly what might have been used in speaking of a tribe of savages, to whom civilization had accidentally reached. . . . We must hope that the excellent result of the experiment may cause its being repeated. I would there were a Mademoiselle Calandrine, in every town and village of Italy !

And now good night ! To-morrow we set off for Florence.

Per correr miglior (?) acqua, alza la vela. —  
Can you not imagine my dreams ?

## LETTER VI.

Arrival at Florence.—The fever of anticipation.—First sight of the Duomo.—Mr. Greenough's statue of Washington.—The Duomo.—Its vastness, and its want of beauty.—Portrait of Dante.—Tombs of Brunelleschi and Giotto.—Bandinelli.—Michael Angelo's Pieta.—Baptistry.—Campanile.—Sasso di Dante.—His mention of the Baptistry.—His revenge.

Florence, April 1841.

As usual we started with our faithfully-ready *vetturino*, considerably earlier than it is usual for most people to leave their pillows.... But we had an especial reason for wishing to be early on this occasion, as we were expected to dinner at the house of the friend to whom we were going in Florence, and I wished to avoid the disagreeable hurry which arriving a little too late always occasions under such circumstances. However, we were on this occasion earlier than was absolutely necessary, for the journey is a very easy one, the road excellent, and with very little hilly ground to produce delay. We breakfasted at Empoli, and reached the Tuscan capital by four o'clock.

In approaching any place that has been during long years the object of hopes and fears, of wishing and despair, it is, I suppose, rational to be a little

excited; though I know that some tempers take this sort of thing much more quietly than others, wisely enjoying whatever pleasure may chance to meet them, without any previous suffering from impatience, or any unreasonable ecstasy when it arrives. I have all my life been endeavouring to teach myself this respectable species of philosophy, but I am sorry to say that, even now, notwithstanding the many years I have been about it, I have made so very little progress, that I often feel a good deal ashamed of myself, especially if I happen to be in the presence of any particularly-superior-minded person; for nearly all such, as I know by sad experience, think but lowly of my wisdom. Perhaps I never felt this fever of anticipation more strongly than in approaching Florence. How much of what has embellished my early years had its origin from thence! . . . . I almost felt as if I were going to enter bodily into the presence of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio . . . . as if the great Cosmo, would be staring me full in the face, and Lorenzo exhibited in all his splendour before me. Though the coffee on which I had breakfasted had been as innocently free from all exhilarating qualities as the purest decoction of endive, my heart beat as I passed the last milestone before reaching the gates of Florence, as if I had taken a bowl of Parisian *café noir*. As I caught sight of her towers, I could not but fancy I knew them all . . . . That of the Palazzo Vecchio, at least, I knew by sight

then, as well as I do now.... And who could mistake the majestic dome of Brunelleschi?

But as we advanced into the streets all these great historic features were merged in the ordinary appearances, common to all the cities of the earth, and for a while all my poetical reminiscences gave way before the confusion of butchers' stalls, grocers' shops, pedlars' booths, and the busy, and not very picturesque-looking population which was basking about among them. At length, however, our road led us through the Piazza del Duomo, and for one unreasonable moment, I wished to stop the carriage that I might get a full view of the stupendous edifice which occupied the successive labours of Di Lapo, Giotto, Brunelleschi, Donatello, Gaddi, Orgagna, Baccio d'Agnolo, Lorenzo di Filippo, Verrocchio, and, greatest of all, Michael Angelo! But a sharp shower of rain falling at the moment, assisted materially in cooling this fever of impatience, and I consented to go on, though its immensity prevented our doing more than catching a small portion of its marble splendour as we passed beneath it.

There must have been considerable difficulty on the following morning in choosing in which direction to go first, had not the matter been decided by the fiat of our friend, who declared that there was one visit which *must* be first, because it was a question of now, or never. The accomplished American sculptor Mr. Greenough was on the very

eve of despatching to Washington city (via Leghorn,) a colossal statue of the great Republican whose name it bears. This statue is destined to occupy the centre of the magnificent rotunda in the capital. This was by far too interesting an object to admit a doubt as to our delaying everything, rather than risk its being sent off before we had paid it a visit. And well did it deserve the promptitude we had shown in paying our compliments to it, for it is a very noble statue. Like every other colossal work seen in the *studio* of the artist, it had the disadvantage of looking as if the roof pressed upon it, and therefore neither the lights, nor, consequently, the shadows, could so fall as to give it all the effect which it will have when placed in the majestic home that awaits it. Nevertheless its well-imagined attitude and expression told well, and it was by no means difficult to imagine that they will tell better still, when placed within a circumference of three hundred feet, and seen by the light thrown on it by the ample dome of the American capital. Not even its enormous size will make it look too massive there, and to all the great *artistique* merit of the work will be added the interest arising from the well-merited glory of its position. This noble statue has been cleverly called "a domestic Jupiter," and there is much about it that justifies this description.

It is so much a habit with my fellow-traveller and myself to make our first visit in every city to

the Cathédrale, Minster, Dom Kirk, or Duomo, as it may happen to be, that though I honestly confess the heathenish *tribuna* was first in my thoughts, it was to the Santa Maria del Fiore, that our next visit was paid. Vast, vast, vast, was certainly the epithet that recurred the oftenest, as we walked round and through, and up and down, this enormous edifice. *Had it a front*, it would externally have an air of almost appalling grandeur from its great extent, and majestic proportions; but the miserable defect of what ought to be the most splendid, or one of the most splendid features of such a structure, produces a feeling of disappointment from which it takes some time to recover. It is very like what we experience upon seeing a beautiful woman with a very ugly nose, or a very ugly mouth....all one can say in praise is qualified by the disparaging *if*. But go where this frontless front is no longer seen, and you must perforce admire the grandeur of the building, its beautiful marble walls, its magnificent east end, the stupendous height of the pile itself, and ~~the~~ surpassing majesty of its enormous dome....I well know that a *prestige* of veneration hangs about this Tuscan temple which it does one little honour to shake off....that the dome which suggested to Michael Angelo the idea of that of St. Peter's, and which, with the exception of its eclipsing offspring, stands unrivalled in the world, is something that ought to create respect and awe too strongly to leave any room in the mind for carping criticism.



But though I knew all this so well, and feel so strongly the disgrace of being insensible to its influence, I cannot with a safe conscience conceal from you the fact that I think the interior of this mighty minster most abominably ugly. If you ask me why? I have no artistique terms in which to answer you, no connoisseur-like reasons for the distaste that is in me....I can only say that the contemplation of its gloomy grandeur afforded me but little pleasure, and that when I unfortunately called to mind some of the Gothic glories of our own country, of Germany, and of France, such a *tramontane* fit of partiality for their light, their graceful, and their rich arcades came over me, that for a moment I closed my eyes, in order that while shutting out what was present, I might luxuriate in the recollection of what was not.

But if you ever come to Florence, my dear friend, you must take care to avoid this sort of weakness, and instead of shutting your eyes, pray open them, and look well about you, that none of all the precious things consigned to the custody of Santa Maria del Fiore may escape your notice. Be sure, for instance, to examine the *matériel*, and the sculptures of the singular choir, which is placed immediately beneath the gigantic cupola, following the angles of its circumference. That this erection, with all its costly details is superbly handsome, everybody that looks at it, must be ready to admit, but any who may chance to remember the choir at

Cologne, will not, I think, be likely very greatly to admire it. Looking up, however, from the centre of this enclosure, the mind becomes deeply impressed by the sense of grandeur which its stupendous roof was doubtless intended to inspire, and it is impossible not to feel that the man who imagined, contrived, and executed it, well deserves the high renown attached to the name of Brunelleschi; one feels, too, while gazing at it, the apt propriety of its inscription :—

“ Tal sopra sasso, sasso  
 Di giro in giro eternamente io strussi,  
 Che così passo passo  
 Alto girando al ciel mi ricondussi.”

Unlike all the Italian churches we have hitherto seen, the Duomo of Florence is neither ornamented nor disfigured by pictures. There are scarcely any, and even the few there are, show themselves so obscurely within this very dark and gloomy pile, that they would almost wholly escape notice, were it not that one or two among them have peculiar interest. Of these, the chief, of course, is that which is shown as the portrait of Dante, painted by Orgagna, but not till several years after the poet had ceased to live, and when the fickle and ungrateful Republic began to feel itself ashamed of the persecution by which it had driven into exile its most glorious son.

The tombs of Brunelleschi and Giotto are placed here side by side, and there is something touching

and gratifying in seeing these great men thus fittingly entombed. . . . The first under the wondrous fabric that himself had raised, and the other deserving no less a place, not only as having aided in the work, but as being the first restorer of painting, and acknowledged to be such not only by Florence, but by all the world.

Another tomb that possesses interest is that of a certain Sir John Hawkwood, a countryman of ours, as his name proclaims, but one of whom we have no particular reason to be proud, unless his bull-dog sort of reputation for bravery can redeem the less magnanimous traits in his character. This vastly brave English knight was a *condottiero* who scrupled not to exercise his valour first for Pisa, and then for Florence. A horrible story is told of his having found two of his men quarrelling about a young female prisoner, upon which, to end the dispute, he, with his own savage hand, butchered the unfortunate girl before their eyes. It seems, nevertheless, that he was on all sides treated as "an honourable man," for the great fresco representation of him on horseback appears to have ever been held as precious, greatly beyond its value as a work of art, and his native sovereign deemed it worth while to demand his bones of the Florentines, quite in the Napoleon style.

The paintings on the cupola, were to me exceedingly disagreeable in every way, even though said to be taken from the Divina Commedia. . . . Innume-

nable figures, outrageously large, are tumbling about in all directions, while Lucifer in the midst of them, prodigiously bigger than all the rest, seems very literally looking about to see whom he may devour. As this frightful work is the joint production of Vasari and Zuccari, I might not, perhaps, have found courage to speak of it in so very disparaging a style, had I not been gratified by the sight of the two following lines, written expressly, as I am assured, on this subject, though I know not by whom—

“ Non sara mai di lamentarsi stanco,  
Se forse un dì non le si dà bianco.”

The sooner the white veil is taken, the better, I think.

As to the sculptures which decorate the choir, the learned seem to differ; for since I saw them, I have had two critiques put into my hands concerning them, the one using the epithet “admirable,” as applied to the principal artist, Bandinelli, and the other stating that the chief of these works, the great marble altar-piece, is capable of conveying no idea, save the failure of the artist.

“ What can we say, when doctors disagree ? ”

Wiser folks than I am, would not venture to say anything, but I shall take the liberty, in defiance of the admiring critic, to doubt the propriety of removing the *pietà* of Michael Angelo, which now stands comparatively out of sight *behind* the altar, in order

to make room for this ambitious group of God the Father mourning over the dead body of the Saviour, by Bandinelli.

This unfinished *pietà* however, is certainly rather too much like a sketch in marble, to be quite fit for the conspicuous place it originally occupied. Nevertheless, the unrivalled hand by which it was wrought, as well as the undeniable merit of the group itself, ought surely to have saved it from the disgrace of being displaced at all, an opinion which may very safely be given without venturing to enter into any critical disquisition on the merits or defects of Bandinelli's group. The marble pavement of this church is, I think, the most *beautiful* part of it; one might almost fancy the floor strewn over with the flowers, which Nature and name, ay, and the canting heralds to boot, have so blended with the idea of this fair city, and of her church. The Madonna del Fiore has received into her lap, as it were, a whole shower of lilies. Red lilies and white, black lilies and grey, mingle most harmoniously together, to form a carpet on which the feet of those who approach her shrine should reverently tread, for they really form a picture almost too beautiful to walk upon.

In approaching the Piazza del Duomo, it is not the mighty church alone which makes you unconsciously stand still, and gaze with wonder and delight. The octangular Baptistry, with its much-vaunted brazen doors, fronts the principal entrance

to the cathedral, and is an adjunct splendid enough to enhance the dignity of the majestic edifice to which it belongs. In the case of almost any other church, indeed, such a massive building, by way of adjunct, would be preposterous, but the Duomo of Florence is so enormous, that its grand Baptistry has no such effect. This building was originally a church, dedicated to St. John Baptist, and is said to date from the sixth century. It is most richly decorated both within and without, and has much both beautiful and curious that well deserves examination. Michael Angelo's often-quoted panegyric upon the doors, which he is said to have declared worthy to be the gates of Paradise, renders this part of the edifice the first on which every stranger's eye is fixed. Oh! what enormous power is there in a name! . . . Well may Fame be "the spur that the clear spirit doth raise," for in addition to the heavenly reception assigned to it by Milton, experience teaches us that it is "a plant that grows on mortal soil," and one that flourishes so well, that it will spread its potent influence to an extent that no distance, either of time or place, can limit. . . . I do not mean to insinuate, however, that the gates of the Baptistry are not deserving all the admiration they receive; I have no doubt in the world that they are so; but neither have I any doubt that thousands of those who now gaze upon them with fond enthusiasm, and with all those animating, delightful sensations, which heartfelt

admiration excites, might very possibly have passed them by with little or no emotion, had not a ray from the fine spirit of the Buonarrotti illumined their delicate groups. This *ray* may, perhaps in the way of adventitious splendour, do for us, what the original gilding of this beautiful work did for him. It is easy to imagine that these majestic portals must have looked very paradisiacal when blazing in the richness of *cinquecento* gilding.

There is yet another object in the Piazza del Duomo, which not only adds indescribable grace to its general effect, but which is individually, to my fancy, by far the most beautiful object there. The Campanile erected by Giotto, in 1334, above thirty years after the death of Arnolfo di Lapo, the first architect employed on the erection of the Duomo itself, is, I believe, accounted the most elegant tower in Italy, and if I knew of any other country that possessed one more elegant, I should be tempted to set out upon a pilgrimage to see it. The famous tower of Bruges is beautiful, exquisitely beautiful, but still, in my estimation, it falls far short of this. The height, the lightness, the exceeding grace of this Tuscan tower, the unequalled beauty of the material, and the exquisite finish of the detail, render it "a thing to wonder at." One feels at once that it is not merely the work of an architect, but of a sculptor, and, in fine, of a *composer* of the first order of artistique genius. It is vain to tell me of its mixed architecture. . . .

What care I how mixed it be, provided the result captivates my eye, and enchants my imagination? The statues which occupy the niches are all excellent, and one or two of them most admirable. Donatello, Andrea Pisano, and Luca della Robbia, are named as the principal artists employed upon them; of the exquisite *bassi rilievi*, two are by Giotto himself, and five by Luca della Robbia. Were I not quite convinced that the position in which Giotto placed all these sculptures, was exactly that from whence they could be seen to the best advantage, I should be longing for a scaffolding that might set me in succession before each of them . . . . but as it is, I am perfectly well contented to see them as they are; and how often, when I am far, far away, shall I wish that I could so see them again!

Close under the houses which form the southern boundary to the Piazza del Duomo, there formerly stood a bench, on which, as tradition says, Dante used very frequently to sit. The spot is still marked by a stone, on which is inscribed the words "SASSO DI DANTE." Perhaps the glorious Campanile looks more beautiful from this spot than from any other; even in Italy there is a "weather-side," and the brilliant material is in considerably better preservation on the southern side than the other. So lovely is this noble erection, as seen from this Sasso di Dante, that I grieved to think he had never beheld it, as, unfortunately, it was not built till



long after he had quitted Florence for ever. . . . Unconscious, however, of what might be, he appears to have been well pleased with what was. . . . Twice, it may be oftener, he alludes, in the "Divina Commedia," to the Baptistry, which must have been full in view from his "Sasso." In the Paradiso he names it as

"Antico vostro Batisteo,"

and in the Inferno, he calls it, affectionately,

"Mio bel San Giovanni,"

a phrase that makes one painfully feel that he loved the ungrateful city which sent him forth as an exile, not only better than she deserved from him, but well enough to increase the sufferings of banishment. Doubtless, Coriolanus thought, when he went over to the Volscians, that he had taken a deep revenge against ungrateful Rome. . . . But how it dwindles when set beside that of Dante against Florence, when he conferred an immortality of infamy on all who had disgraced her, and offended him! . . . Truly the arms of the spirit are stronger than those of the flesh.

## LETTER VII.

Promenade in the Grand Duke's Cascina.—The Arno.—The Apennines.—The villas.—Fiesole.—The conversazione.—The flower-girls and their flowers.—Evening party.—The Pitti Palace.—The Salvator landscapes.—Raphael.—Andrea del Sarto.—Rubens.—Michael Angelo.—Murillo.—Titian.—Vandyke.—Frà Bartolommeo.—Paul Veronese.—Enforced retreat.—Exterior of the palace.—Boboli gardens.—Eating ice.

Florence, April, 1841.

EVERY city in Europe, I believe, has its promenade, where, on horseback, on foot, or in carriages, the belles and the beaux encounter each other. This is always a pleasant arena, and often the scene of a sort of ambitious jousting, that leads to no bloodshed, although it may produce wounded hearts. . . . Tailor vies with tailor. . . . Milliner with milliner. . . . Equipage competes with equipage, and *élégants with élégantes*. . . . Of all the pretty places I have seen or heard of, for this useful and refreshing exercise, the grand-ducal cascina at Florence, is the prettiest. Cascina, I must tell you, though it may chance that you know it already, means a dairy-farm; or more literally still, a place where cheese is made. Now the Grand Duke of Tuscany has his

cheeses made at the distance of less than a mile without the walls of Florence, amidst meadows of the richest verdure, and among forest-trees and evergreen shrubs, which altogether give to the region an air that is neither that of farm, park, nor garden, but a beautiful combination of all three. Excellent roads of all sorts and sizes, for charioteers, cavaliers, and *piétons*, traverse this fine enclosure in every direction; and had these roads nothing to recommend them but the cool beauty of the trees and turf through which they run, they would be a most luxurious retreat from the glaring sunshine of the too fervently-bright city. But in addition to this, they command at many points of their ample extent, views of a charm so great, and so peculiar, that the eye can never weary of looking, nor the imagination of expatiating amidst the objects of which they are composed. I could not, if you were to offer me a world as my reward, arrange these in description, so as to convey to you any idea of their general effect....the power to perform this sort of feat is a gift bestowed on few....but I can rehearse to you some of the principal objects which contribute to form the whole, and this may suffice to convince you that I speak truly when I give it the modest praise of *peculiar*. In taking the usual *giro*, as you arrive from the town, you drive for a while between a fine plantation of very respectable forest-trees, and a broad reach of the Arno. Fancy not, however, that I either now, or

ever, mean to be guilty of the very fraudulent delusion of trying to persuade you that there is any beauty in this shallow, broken, lazy river, beyond its name. "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet," but give another name to the Arno, and it would crawl on to the eye, and the imagination, too, as a stream that none but a very thirsty traveller would turn aside to look at, and even such an one, if he did turn, might be likely enough, if no friendly *diga* were near to economize the scanty stream, to be disappointed. But all this is taking you widely away from the cascina. . . . There is, at any rate, something local and graphic in the name of Arno, and sufficiently so to give it a right to be classed among the *peculiar* features of the scene. But it is after turning away from the pebbly river that you come within sight of the beauty; . . . then it is that a glorious semicircle of Apennines meets your eye, all their numerous soft swellings, and deep cavities, rich in the sunshine and the shade of this most gorgeous climate. . . . Then it is that you gaze upon the palace-like villas of Florence, and upon the countless dwellings of every rank and degree, that nestle in these mountain-hollows, or spread out their bright variety through every acre of the great Tuscan garden at their feet. Go on a little farther and you open the well-known, far-famed, and most poetic hill of Fiesole . . . beautiful in its isolated elevation . . . beautiful in its bold outline . . . beautiful by the convent that crowns its summit, and

the fine tower beneath it, . . . and doubly, trebly, beautiful by the poetic halo that has settled round it, and which can never fade, as long as language lasts and hills endure.

And now, the *giro* being nearly finished, you reach the buildings of the farm, in front of which is an esplanade of gravel, of sufficient extent to permit a hundred or two of carriages to draw up, with space enough left between for horsemen and horsewomen to circulate among them, and for gentlemen on foot (I never saw a lady risk her safety in this way) to walk about and chat to their acquaintance. No place can offer a prettier scene of gaiety and gossip than this esplanade when the tide of carriages is at the height. Last night was our first introduction to it, and though as yet a stranger to every one I saw, I enjoyed the scene extremely. On reaching this wide space before the dairy, every carriage stops, taking its station sometimes according to the coachman's pleasure, sometimes in submission to that of his mistress, who may choose to draw up beside a friend, and sometimes, if arriving late, it may be obliged to content itself with any portion of vacant ground big enough to admit its entry. And then the gentlemen in the carriages appear one and all to spring out of them, seldom, as it seemed to me, deeming it necessary to have the step let down . . . nearly all the carriages being open . . . and they circulate from step to step, and from door to door, or from horse to horse. Sometimes

the gentlemen from one equipage take their place in another, or hang about it in a variety of graceful attitudes, flirting the while with the fair dames, who all remain in dignified possession of their cushioned ease.

Meanwhile, half a dozen, or so, of very picturesque-looking flower-girls, with large, flat, flapping hats of Tuscan straw, (*Anglicè* Leghorn,) make their way fearlessly among the horses, and each claiming an intimate personal acquaintance with all the company (a claim which nobody denies), they begin tossing their beautiful bouquets into the laps of the ladies, trusting to the gallantry of the gentlemen for payment; who, either for the pleasure of the fair ones receiving these lovely offerings, or for that of the pretty coquets who bestow them, appear not at all disposed to disappoint them. And oh! the beauty of these flowers so carelessly received, and so lavishly given! I know not a blossom that we love and prize that I did not last night see again and again tossed into the carriage as plentifully as if they had been field-daisies. It was at Genoa that I first began to feel how completely I was living in a garden. Every terrace of every house.... every garden-hedge, every stall in every street was redolent of the richest odours and the most brilliant bloom. No town, or village by the road-side, but displayed the same delicious abundance of all that is fairest and sweetest in nature; and on arriving here, I seemed to have reached the *ne plus*

*ultra* of floral splendour. . . . I think it is impossible that you can conceive anything like the perfection and the abundance of this luxury at Florence.

The favourite hour for the cascina drive seems to be immediately after a six o'clock dinner. . . . For that was the time at which we went there, and the place was then so crowded that I think most of the equipages of Florence must have been upon the ground. We returned from this very agreeable drive in time to dress for a party at home, . . . a pleasant, easy circle assembled, chatting and eating ices till eleven o'clock ; but there were no Italians among them, nor is it very often, as far as I can understand, that the travelling English obtain the advantage of good Italian society. I have, however, letters for Rome that I think will break the spell for me there. Meantime if we cannot talk to them, we must look at them, and we mean to go to the Cocomero theatre to-morrow night for that purpose.

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And where think you we have been this morning ? for of our morning I have as yet rendered no account. To the *Tribuna* ? . . . No ! . . . It really seems as if I were to be taught patience by a chapter of accidents, all tending to make that come last, which I was so very much determined should come first. However, I will not affect to grumble at the fate which took me this morning to the Pitti palace, for certainly were I obliged to leave Italy

to-morrow, I should be ready to confess that I had not crossed the Alps in vain. The Grand-duke's collection of pictures is by very many degrees the best I have ever seen, and not only possesses some of the finest pictures I ever looked at, but fewer bad ones than might fairly be forgiven in a collection so large. The Paris, the Vienna, and the Munich galleries may all be quoted as instances where admirable pictures are offended by the mixture of many indifferent, and some very bad ones. . . . In all of these one has to seek out the good pictures, and may often find cause to rejoice that, though far between, the visit need not be short, as it depends on yourself, for very little time is fully sufficient for the intervals. But here it is hardly too much to say that the case is exactly reversed, and that if, from perversity of spirit, you are determined to look at a bad picture, you have to seek for it, and may not very easily find it when you do. The lights, too, are, for the most part, excellent, considering that they are only lateral, and the attendants are always ready to assist you in so placing the pictures (which are all, or nearly all, hung with hinges), as to take full advantage of it . . . . and then it is quite uncrowded, and well-catalogued. You are followed by no guardians to hurry or plague you, in any way, though if you wish to ask a question, or borrow a hand for the purpose of moving a picture upon its hinges, you can rarely look round without finding what you want. In short, it is not



only the best, but in everyway the most enjoyable collection to which I have ever yet found my way; nor do I hope, though the Transfiguration, the Assumption, and a few other such trifling etceteras remain behind, ever to find myself again, (that is for the first time,) in the presence of so many *chefs-d'œuvre*.

It is much easier to talk to you thus in general terms of this magnificent museum, than to speak of the most precious pictures, individually, for so many crowd upon the memory, that it is difficult to make a selection, and impossible to name all. Perhaps those which the most decidedly exceed in excellence all that I have before seen from the same hand, are the Salvator landscapes. . . . If anything accomplished by the hand of man can be perfect, I would say that the best of his two great *marine* landscapes here, was so. That any imitation of nature should exceed this, appears to me quite impossible. One's very soul seems to enter into the picture, and you live and breathe in it. There is, I believe, something a little Irish in talking of a *marine landscape*, yet I know not how else to describe it. Landscape that can hardly be called in which nearly the whole scene is water; neither would marine alone do better, where there is land enough to hold buildings and groups of figures. The word *marine*, however, is suggested by the vessels, etcetera, which make so conspicuous a part in both these great compositions. But call them what

you will, they are, particularly the favourite one, more deserving of admiration, than any words I can find, can make you understand. The Conspiracy of Catiline, by the same master, is a picture of great reputation, and one that everybody knows from engravings, but it gave me less pleasure than the landscapes. And where shall I turn next? How pick out favourites from among such a crowd of adorables? The Madonna della Seggiola, is all that is gentlest, and sweetest, and fondest . . . . no living mother could caress a child more touchingly . . . . and the expression is so simple, so perfectly unforced, and without affectation of any kind, that only a great master would have ventured upon it, as the subject of a work of such elaborate finish. . . . yet, with all this simplicity, there is an elegance and a grace about the head that mixes something of divine with its womanly softness. I have before to-day seen good pictures of Andrea del Sarto, and much have I admired them, but of him, as of Salvatore, I could say that it is only at the Pitti that you can see how very excellent he could be. . . . Then Rubens has two landscapes here that I love better to look at than all the legs and arms he ever painted. The well-known picture of the Fates, by Michael Angelo, though I have heard it sharply criticised as a painting, has I think more poetry in it, than I ever saw on canvass. Had Shakspeare seen it, one might fancy that it had suggested to him the idea of his Witches, so supernaturally full

of power do the withered features look. But yet they are not quite witches, either. . . . They are too sublime. There is more philosophy, more meditation, more intensity of thought than need go to the imagining of vengeance for a chestnut denied, or even to the scaring, exciting, and bewildering the fitful spirit of Macbeth. The three sister executives of destiny stand . . . . not in consultation . . . . not as united in one solemn act, but rather as if each, intent upon her own allotted task, thought slightly of that of the others. The variety of expression in these three old wrinkled visages, is astonishing. Beauty withers, but expression (on this canvass at least), seems to strengthen with age. The calm, cold, steadfastness of destruction which the hag with the shears exhibits, makes one shudder. . . . How merciless! How utterly inexorable! . . . While she who spins the thread, looks almost pitifully forward to the destruction of it. . . . And the third, whose share in the awful business I do not very distinctly understand, has a dark sinister eye that seems watching them both, as they forward the fatal work, with a fiend-like sort of interest that looks ready to do all the mischief with her own hands, in case they should fail in accomplishing it.

Murillo has a Madonna, that with all the loveliness of a woman, has the purity and innocence of a child. Titian has portraits, before which I think I could sit down for the whole live-long day,

and patiently wait till they should condescend to speak to me. Vandyke and Rubens have, both of them, some admirable pictures here, but this is our own strong ground, and good as they are, we can show better still. But there is a master who shows himself at the Pitti with a majestic dignity that was quite new to me. I do not quite mean to say that I never heard of the Frà Bartolommeo, but I had scarcely a more distinct idea of his very peculiar style, than of that of Apelles. But now, methinks, I know him well, and never can forget the feeling of awe with which his St. Mark inspired me. The Deposition from the cross, too, though in a different style, inspires the same species of respectful reverence. The genius of this great painter must have been formed by the Roman Catholic religion, and by the demand for works of holy dignity required to decorate its shrines. I never saw pictures which appeared to me so perfectly to possess the character of religious decorations. I could fancy St. Luke painting them. And then there is a species of miracle of another sort, a portrait of Daniele Barbara, by Paul Veronese, which if looked at with a proper management of light, has so mysterious an air of life, as to be rather alarming.

Raphael's three portraits in one composition, (Leo X, between two cardinals,) have also so many qualities of life in them that had not the species of magic which produced them been decreed by common consent to be "an art lawful as eating," I think it

might have gone hard with the great Urbinian. . . . Do not be weary yet ! . . . There is a Madonna of Raphael, whose *sobriquet* is del Baldocchino. . . . I think I declared just now that the manner and style of showing this matchless gallery was just perfect, and everything that it ought to be ; but in the warmth of my gratitude for pleasure enjoyed, I at that moment forgot the cruel regulation which, if you enter at ten, drives you away at twelve, or if you choose the afternoon, and arrive at two, obliges you to turn away your unwilling feet at four. This dreaded driving away came upon me just as I had fixed myself before this radiant Madonna del Baldocchino, so that I could but just see that it seemed at that moment of mortification to be worth all the rest, before I was obliged to join myself to the departing troop, who, to my fancy, looked for all the world like so many Adams and Eves turned out of Paradise. So I suppose you will hear no more of the Palazzo Pitti for some time to come, as the multitude of things standing on our list to be seen will, I suspect, be so far taken in order as to prevent my returning thither to-morrow, which I should most unquestionably do, if I consulted only my own inclination.

The royal residence which contains this noble treasury, has a very grand and imposing elevation, and produces to my fancy a more powerful effect than many façades which I believe are reckoned finer. One cause of this may be that the style is

quite new to me. Forsyth says, and truly enough I confess, that there is a rude and exaggerated strength in the massive construction which seems intended to fortify the whole basement of this palace. It certainly is so, for the rugged and colossal blocks of which it is composed must be bomb-proof, and cannon-proof too, I should imagine, and therefore it appears somewhat more massive than is necessary in an edifice which shows no other indication of being intended for defence . . . . but altogether the effect, though very strange, is very noble.

On leaving the palace, we made an ignorant attempt to enter the Boboli gardens, which stretch out most magnificently behind it, and which, from the glimpse we got from the windows, appear to be very beautiful in all ways. But as to-day is neither Sunday nor Thursday, our attempt was met by a civil, but very decided refusal from the military guard stationed at the gate. This restriction is the more vexatious because it is exceedingly *mauvais ton*, as I am told, to appear there on the Sunday, the regular *endimanchés* taking entire possession of it; and a promenade limited to one day in the week, often remains long unvisited, from the difficulty of finding that one day unoccupied. . . . So the Boboli seems postponed pretty nearly *sine die*.

Indeed to say truth it can be no very easy matter at Florence to find time for anything of the kind,

for the beautiful cascina being as fashionable as it is fascinating the going there every evening seems almost a matter of course, and I think I must repeat this evening ceremony very often, before there is any chance of my getting weary of it. We went there again this evening, and every object looked ten times more enchanting than the evening before. . . . The lights and shades were more decidedly of gold and purple, the flowers were sweeter, the company gayer, and the sight of Fiesole more inspiring. On returning from the cascina, we this evening drove to Donay's, the favourite confectioner, where the crowd of carriages was so great that I thought our footman evinced both skill and courage in making his way into the shop, and returning to the carriage with a tray of ices. And here again the flower-girls were assembled, and contrived with laughing hardihood to make their way almost under the horses' heels, tossing their beautiful nosegays again into the ladies' laps, and then escaping with a friendly nod, kissing their hands, and crying "*à dimane!*" . . . which means that they will be contented to take half a dollar in payment to-morrow, in the safety of the cascina, instead of a few *sous* to-day, at the risk of their lives.

And now I must positively wish you good night, having sat up scribbling long after the rest of the family . . . who are by this time I doubt not, all fast asleep.

## LETTER VIII.

Cocomero theatre.—Disagreeable performances. — The Ufizj.— Venus de Medicis. — First impression. — The dancing faun. — The Knife-grinder. — The Apollino. — The Wrestlers. — The Paintings of the Tribune.—Raphael.—The Fornarina.—Michael Angelo's Holy Family.—Piazza del Gran' Duca.—Palazzo Vecchio. — Loggia dei Lanzi. — Statue of Cosmo First, by John of Bologna.—Orsanmichele. — Statues of the Piazza.—Contradictory judgments.

Florence, April, 1841.

I WAS much too fatigued after the Cocomero last night to repeat the *tour de force* of the night before, and though, like good Sir Charles Bowden, I hold it an excellent thing to

“Sum the actions of the day  
Each night before I sleep,”

I will by no means undertake to do it, after passing the last hour of the day in such very disagreeable labour as this Cocomero proved to be. The box was taken without any questions asked, I believe, respecting the performances, and solely because there was *relâche* at the Pergola, that, (the Opera-house) being here, as everywhere, the great focus of theatrical elegance. But the Cocomero is the theatre second in size and splendour, and therefore as a matter of course it was to be



visited. But anything so detestable as the performances of last night, I never saw before, and devoutly hope never to see again. A parcel of wretched creatures, boys, lads, and men, whose joints if not broken on the wheel, must surely have

dislocated by some other process, performed a succession of monstrous distortions that it is sickening to recollect, and one portion of the reward they got for so doing was the shrieks and shoutings of applause elicited by every horrible distortion . . . . the more frightful the feat, the more vehement the applause. The principal source of success seemed to lie in placing the limbs, nay even the head, in such a way as to render it a matter of uncertainty whether the self-made monster was looked at before, or behind. In short it was a horror from beginning to end. The theatre is a very handsome one, but not equal in splendour to those of Genoa or Turin.

This morning was at length fixed upon as that on which we were to be introduced to the "Ufizj" . . . to the Royal Gallery . . . to its far-famed tribune . . . in a word to the Venus de Medicis! . . . for I am quite sure that after all it was the idea of this statue which had so taken possession of my head as to prevent my feeling fully at liberty to occupy myself with anything else. So immediately after breakfast we set forth, and again I had a fit of anticipation fever, and felt as if I were going to do, or to suffer, some great thing that was to constitute an epoch in my existence.

I cannot give you a greater proof of the *unreasonable* extent of this feeling, than by confessing that I drove through the Piazza del Gran' Duca, under the exquisite tower of the Palazzo Vecchio, and before the Loggia dei Lanzi, with a sort of misty consciousness that I was got among a world of wonders . . . that the ghosts of all the Medici were flitting around me, and that I had nothing to do but look about with a very little speculation in my eyes, in order to perceive and recognise them . . . yet still without a wish to stop, to get out, to examine, or, in short, to do anything in the world except drive on, and get into the presence of the *immortal* as fast as I could. As far as altitude is concerned, her position is as appropriate as it is possible to make it, being as near the empyrean as it was in their power to place her . . . unless indeed they had formed a niche for her on the top of the Palazzo Vecchio tower itself. Broad and stately are the steps that lead to her, but so numerous as to make one very glad to arrive at the top of them, even independent of the happy consciousness of having reached her foot-stool.

Having delivered up walking-sticks and parasols to a military-looking guardian stationed at the entrance of the gallery, and purchased from him a catalogue of all its contents, we darted off through the long vista that stretched before us in the direction which we were given to understand led to the

sacred spot. It was in vain that gods and goddesses, emperors and philosophers, priestesses and satyrs, stood sternly in their marble dignity, on either side of us, as if to demand the passing compliment of a glance. Had their great originals been there instead, I doubt if we should have paused to look at them. No! . . . On, on, on, we went, as if bewitched, which was in truth reversing the proper order of events, for instead of preceding, the bewitchment ought to have followed our arrival. At length the green-baize door was reached, and to prevent all doubts or blundering, the word "Tribuna" is inscribed over it. It yields to the slightest touch, retires noiselessly from before you, and there you are *vis-à-vis* to the Venus de Medicis.

It would be exceedingly amusing, were it possible to get at the first spontaneous thoughts and sensations which arise in the souls of those who visit this statue, upon its first taking possession of their eyes. There are some, who may be enabled by their highly-educated taste, and familiar acquaintance with what constitutes the highest excellence in sculpture, to perceive at once all that the more ignorant require leisure to discover; and these I doubt not, feel, at the first glance, and with all the assurance of knowledge, totally unmixed with any of the intoxicating vapour of enthusiasm, that what they look upon is supreme in excellence, and that the delicate little creature before them fully deserves all the rapturous noise she has made in

the world. This I feel to be possible, and quite believe to be true. . . . But that it requires an eye thus accomplished to discern by this first glance all that is so marvellous in the work as to have sustained its unvarying fame through ages, I feel very sincerely convinced. What sensation I expected to experience on beholding it, I really cannot tell; but I suppose it was some sort of *saisissement* that was to be very elevating, very delightful, very sublime. . . . Something that might, perhaps, bring tears into the eyes, or make it, for a moment, rather difficult to speak. . . . I do not quite like to say in broad English that I was disappointed, first because I am not quite sure that it is true, and next, because I should be rather ashamed of it . . . . but as to any of the vehement emotions above-mentioned, I certainly felt them not. After the first long stedfast look has been taken, I suppose everybody steps forward, as we did, to make a closer survey of this new acquaintance; and then it was that I began to feel conscious that there *was* something special and peculiar about this statue. . . . Something that must for ever prevent its being mixed and confounded in the memory, with any other. No undraped figure ever stood before one with such retiring modesty, such unoffending simplicity, such gentle delicacy. It seems scarcely a figure of speech to say, that this air of purity hangs about her like a palpable veil, giving a grace which, before one had seen it here, might naturally

have been declared beyond the reach of art. . . . and that it was found not so, makes one of the miracles that attaches to the formation of this worshiped marble, and perhaps not the least. I think I should have been well pleased to have left the gallery without looking at anything else. But who ever found themselves in the room with the Dancing Faun, the Knife-Grinder, the Apollino, and the Wrestlers, and left it without looking at them? This was quite out of the question; so having sat down for a few minutes in order to recover composure after seeing for the first time, with the outward eye, an object that had been familiar through life to the imagination, I began my walk round the Tribune. This apartment, by the way, seems hardly worthy of the honourable destiny to which it has been elected, for despite the "*nacre de perles*" that ornaments its dome, and the "*marbre d'un grand prix*," which, as the Florence guide tells us, forms the floor; the room is but an ugly room, and looks more like the interior of a stumpy tower, than a hall for statues. It is octagonal, and though stated to be twenty-one French feet in diameter, looks, from its disproportioned height, considerably smaller. The door of entrance occupies one of the eight sides; the Venus, that immediately opposite to it. In the division on her right hand are the Wrestlers, in that to the left, the Knife-Grinder. Then facing each other are two smaller doors, leading to other apartments of the museum, and the

two remaining sides are occupied by the little figure called the Apollino, and by the Dancing Faun. Of these statues I most decidedly prefer the last-named, and this simply because it appears to me to have more truth, and a closer adherence to nature, than either of the others. The Apollino is said to be by the same artist as the Venus (though who that artist was, seems a point by no means decided, some loudly claiming for her the illustrious chisel of Praxiteles, while others, satisfied by the authority of the inscription on the *cinquecento* base declare it to be the work of Cleomene). This little statue of the Apollino is exceedingly admired by the learned, and it certainly is very pretty, and graceful, but it did not excite in me the same degree of admiration as either the Dancing Faun or the kneeling Knife-Grinder. This last figure appears to me admirable, and if less so than the Faun, it is only because it has less of movement, to give which is, of all the tricks of art, the most difficult, and the manner in which it is performed by the air and attitude of the Faun is most truly wonderful. Of the Wrestlers, those only I think can judge properly who have watched the muscles when brought into action by a struggle somewhat similar to that in which these two pretty lads are engaged. Here, too, is movement, but I had no experience to teach me how to criticise its truth.

All these statues must, I am quite sure, be seen

again and again before the admirable skill with which they are formed can be thoroughly felt . . . for I never returned to either of them, during the hour or two that I passed in the room this morning without perceiving some wonderful delicacy of workmanship, either in the form, position, or attitude, which had before escaped me; and long before I came away, I arrived very satisfactorily at the conviction that in no other country that I had visited, nor in all these countries put together, had I ever seen statues that could bear comparison with them.

There were still, however, the many celebrated pictures of the Tribune to be looked at, nor did we leave the room till we had assiduously made the circuit of it, to examine them. But though the statues in this room may assuredly be seen at any time, without the slightest danger of losing their effect, it is not so with the pictures. The Pitti gallery ought not to be visited before the vaunted collection of the Tribune. There is, doubtless much of curiosity and interest in having brought before one's eyes, in juxtaposition so close as to render comparison easy, the three distinct styles of Raphael. Never before had I so clearly understood what these three styles meant. It was to me a piece of connoisseurship, a sort of artistique phrase that I was not called upon to comprehend, unless I should happen to take an inclination to use it, a contingency by no means likely to occur,

and, therefore, even unto this day, I have lived, comparatively speaking, in ignorance of the very remarkable diversity of manner in which a man, who died under forty, has marked the different periods of his career.

The picture known by the name of "The Florentine Lady," when looked at immediately after the portraits of Pope Julius, of St. John in the Wilderness, or of his Fornarina, can hardly be credited as coming from the same palette; but looking at the neighbouring work of his master, Pietro Perugino, it is not difficult, even for an unpractised eye, to see how closely the manner of Perugino is followed in it. Not but that the lady of Raphael is incomparably more alive than either the Virgin, the Saviour, the St. John, or the Sebastian of Perugino's picture, but the style is very like it. The Holy Family in which the infant Baptist holds a goldfinch is said to be in his second manner, as well as another, also a Holy Family, but greatly superior in excellence. Still, however, you may perceive in both an enormous inferiority in colouring and general effect to all, or either, of the three other of his works which are preserved here, and all of which are in his third, and best manner.... Of these three, the Fornarina is the picture most known, most cited, most talked about. As a work of art it is not very easy to find fault with it.... for it almost lives and breathes; it has the warmth of healthful life upon the cheek, and the softness of human feeling in the eye, the throat and arm are round as if



in palpable relief, and the colouring has a quality of light in it, that makes one fancy it would be visible in the dark. Yet with all this, and a good deal more of the same kind that I could say of it, all tending to prove its incredibly close following of nature, it is not a picture that gives me any great pleasure. The woman looks vulgarly Fornarina-ish, and though full of feeling, the physiognomy is not redeemed by it from this accusation. . . . I better love the gracious softness of her of the Seggiola. . . . The Fornarina looks as if she could give a kiss, and a buffet too, if the fancy took her. . . . while the virgin mother, in her tasselled chair, seems too pure for the one, too feminine for the other, and too angelic for either. Both the Baptist and the Pope are beyond praise. . . . I *think* I like this Julius the Second better still than the one at the Pitti. One may stand and look at it till one fancies that it is about to speak. The two great Titians may be, and I suppose are, very beautiful Venuses . . . but they are not agreeable pictures.

There is a little Correggio that fascinated me greatly. A virgin mother on her knees, and a heaven-born infant sleeping on a corner of her mantle that has fallen on the ground; the position speaks beautifully of the tender patience of the mother, who could not change her attitude without awaking him. . . . It is a lovely picture. There is also a Holy Family here, bearing the enormous name of Michael Angelo; and if one could see a bit of

mud upon a board, and be assured on good authority that it was his hand which put it there, we all should, would, and must, feel great reverence for it, and allow with very sincere gravity, that it ought to be preserved with the care belonging to a relic, almost holy. . . . But I suppose it would not follow that we must also admire it as a work of art? At any rate, if to admire either the supposed bit of mud, or the existing Holy Family above-mentioned, be necessary to the establishing a reputation for taste, I must withdraw all claim to such reputation, for if it were ten times Michael Angelo's, I should still be of opinion, that this Holy Family, independent of his name, would not be considered worth five pounds by any collector in the world. Of the other pictures in this Tribune I will not attempt to speak, and that for the very good reason that I did not see them. This was owing partly to the very defective light, and partly to the necessity of leaving the room before I had half done with the statues and the Raphaels; for here, as at the Pitti, you are obliged to take your departure at four o'clock. As to all the other large collections of statues, bronzes, pictures, gems, and I know not what beside, which are contained under the same splendid Medicean roof as this little Tribune, they are still to be seen.

Nothing can be much more striking and noble than the piazza in which the building containing this museum stands. But though no assemblage of architectural objects that I have ever seen can be more

likely to be long and distinctly remembered, I know not one of which it would be more difficult to give a distinct idea by description. On one side stands a row of houses distinguished by nothing that I know of, save their great height and irregular elevations. On another side is the post-office, ugly enough in everyway, and flanked to right and left by tall grim-looking dwellings, having shops of no very brilliant appearance on their ground floors. The comeliness of this quarter of the celebrated Piazza del Gran' Duca, is, moreover, by no means enhanced by a very unsightly, though commodious tarpawling, stretched forward to the distance of some twenty feet, to protect those who apply for letters, from the rays of the sun. Another doubtful decoration of the same quarter is the daily exhibition of a multitude of grotesque *affiches* suspended between poles above the heads of the passengers to announce the various theatrical entertainments of the evening. Now, have I not begun well in my ambitious attempt to make you understand the extreme splendour, the air of matchless magnificence, the stupendous Medicean grandeur of this piazza? . . . . All this is perfectly correct, however, and many other little details might be added, such as the daily assembling of market-carts, and the very unceremonious spreading out of sacks of grain and various other commodities upon the pavement . . . . but all this is absolutely forgotten, overwhelmed, and lost

sight of, beside the vastness and the dignity of the edifices which occupy another portion of the area.

As you approach from the side where stands the post-office, that mighty tower faces you with whose elevation you are probably familiar, as I imagine it has been engraved at the very least a hundred times. It is very massive, and would be gloomily austere, from the harsh simplicity of the masonry, were it not that its daring height, and the picturesque projection of its battlements give it both grace and dignity. The thrice venerable Palazzo Vecchio to which it is attached, or which rather is attached to it . . . for when the palace was erected in 1298 by Lapo, the first architect of the cathedral, the tower was already standing . . . is all that the mind can desire as a sort of type, or embodying, of all historic thoughts and fancies concerning the Florentine Republic. It is vast, it is strong, it is stern; but it is splendid, proud-looking, and majestic. Nor are minor details wanting to assist its historic eloquence . . . It is strangely irregular in form, being, in fact, most comically crooked; but enquire why it is so, and you will find that it is because the building of it straight, would have obliged the thin-skinned citizens to permit a portion of it to rest upon ground once occupied by the dwellings of the Uberti, a Ghibeline faction whom they had routed and banished, after knocking their houses about their ears. . . . And, therefore, in

the true spirit of republican heroes, they commanded the architect to build it awry.

In a line with this architectural *animale parlante* runs the magnificent double arcade which forms the portico to the Fabbria degli Ufizj. These arcades turn, and meet at the end farthest from the piazza, forming an arch that opens upon the river. Above this arch is a bronze group by John of Bologna, representing Cosmo the First. The gallery we had just quitted is on the third floor above these arcades, and extending over the whole of them.

Imagine yourself again before the Palazzo Vecchio, and then you may chance to understand what I mean by saying that at right angles with it, and nothing intervening but the double line of the above-mentioned portico, stands the celebrated Loggia dei Lanzi, the glory of Andrea Orgagna, and of the Grand Duke's piazza, and the most highly-decorated profane building in Florence. It is indeed most richly beautiful! Elevated by several steps above the level of the piazza, its graceful arches, with their fine Corinthian pillars, rich frieze, and elegant open parapet are seen from every part of the enclosure to the greatest advantage, and I believe it is generally considered to be one of the finest porticoes in existence. It was built as an adjunct to the Palazzo Vecchio, it being usual, and even necessary, that all public buildings, in that republican age, should have an open gallery, or portico, in which the venerated mob might assem-

ble, and let their "most sweet voices" be heard, without the risk either of a *coup de soleil*, or a shower-bath. Great as is the architectural beauty of this loggia, it would not be what it is . . . it would not strike you, as it does now, as the richest little edifice that you ever saw . . . were it not adorned by admirable statues . . . not placed in niches, as if merely an ornament to the wall . . . but standing boldly forward as if to people it; the walls, too, are ornamented with *alti rilievi*, and the entrance is now guarded, as it were, by two magnificent antique marble lions, brought hither from the Villa Medici at Rome, towards the close of the last century.

Near to the Palazzo Vecchio, on the side farthest from the arcades of the Ufizi, is an enormous fountain. . . . Enormous, not so much from the quantity of water it throws up, though that is ample, as from its elaborate decoration of colossal sculptures. A Neptune, nearly twenty-feet high, I believe, is in the midst, and round about him are a various host, composed of tritons, sea-horses, sub-marine deities of different sorts and sizes, and such a multitude of shells, and other accessories, as might puzzle the most patient investigation to understand. But altogether it forms a sort of orderly confusion, that at least gives an air of much richness and profusion of ornament. In the centre of the piazza (which un-English word I am obliged to repeat, because I may not call the area *a square*) is placed a most noble equestrian statue of Cosmo the First, by John of

Bologna. I would not wish for anything more gravely graceful than this majestic figure. It is a perfect Vandyke in bronze.

This notable piazza has yet another feature of great dignity, which though not belonging to it, lends it much beauty. This is the building, mis-called, I think, a tower, which from a granary erected by Lapo in 1284, has since been converted into a church, and is known by the name of Orsanmichele, meaning, I presume, Ora San Michele. This huge square edifice, rising with its solid sides high above all the neighbouring buildings, forms a striking object from the Piazza del Gran' Duca, from which it is separated by a narrow space, of no great length; and its rich projecting cornice, and beautiful windows do much towards completing the architectural splendour of the *coup d'œil*.

There is still more to be told of the splendour of this renowned spot, and that concerning a portion of its embellishments, by no means the least important, or the least celebrated. I mean its statues. To leave sculptures furnished by Michael Angelo, John of Bologna, Benvenuto Cellini, and Donatello utterly unnoticed, would lay me under the suspicion of being blind, both body and soul. But what can I do, good friend? How extricate myself from an embarrassment produced by ignorance on the one side, and, alas! by too much learning on the other. That respectable *dictum* about a little learning being a dangerous thing is vastly well in its way, but you

may depend upon it there is now and then as much danger from having too much, as from having too little. That you may understand upon what this opinion is founded I must tell you what happened to me to-day, after driving home from the Piazza del Gran' Duca.

You must know that under each of the three arches of the colonnade of the Loggia dei Lanzi, is a group of statues, two being of marble and one of bronze. Of these the first is in marble by John of Bologna; the second in bronze, by Benvenuto Cellini, and the third in marble by Donatello. Likewise, you must know that before the entrance to the Palazzo Vecchio are two colossal statues, both in marble. One representing David, by Michael Angelo, and the other Hercules, by Baccio Bandinelli. Moreover, as I have told you already, there is a fountain adorned with sundry sculptures, both in marble and in bronze. Now the general effect of all this, was, to my fancy, exceedingly splendid; but I had not time for more than a hasty examination, and when I got home, I sat down, before dressing for dinner, and turned over sundry guide-books and volumes of travels in order that before I set out again to take a more leisurely survey, I might collect a little more information than I possessed respecting them. Now see what I got by this meritorious desire for information.

Of the Hercules by Bandinelli, Valery says that it is "the most important of that artist's works,"



.... that "the group is grand," .... "the joining of the neck and body admirable." Mr. Bell calls it, "bulky, ill-formed, tame, and upright." Conder says of the same statue, calling it, by the way, the work of *Donatello*, that it is "ill-formed, tame, and upright." Of Michael Angelo's juvenile production, David slaying Goliath, the judgments are equally various. .... Of the huge Neptune of the fountain, M. Valery says, "The lightness of this colossal Neptune is extreme." .... While two other accomplished gentlemen declare it to be tame and bulky. .... But the most distressing discrepancy of all is that respecting the group, by John of Bologna, of the carrying away of a Sabine woman. Of this, M. Valery says, "It is in reality little more than an alehouse-scene. .... a husband knocked down, and a soldier running away with his wife." .... Whereas Mr. Bell, whose judgment I confess appears to me, too accurate on all points to be safely contradicted so flatly, speaks of the group in very high terms, and concludes, after describing at some length the subject, by saying "All this is finely told, and constitutes a group of great merit, which, especially when beheld in a front view, is very fine."

Do you not think I should have done better to have let my books alone, and permitted myself to like, or dislike, according to my own fancy without troubling myself to discover what wiser folks thought about the matter? .... Such, at any rate,

is my own opinion, and henceforward I intend to blunder on, approving or not approving, without any reference to "foregone conclusions," which, were they uniform, or even tolerably accordant, might help to correct ignorance, if they could not generate taste . . . . . but, finding that authorities vary as much among each other, as I can vary from any of them, I shall henceforth make the matter easy by not referring to them at all.

## LETTER IX.\*

Visit to Mr. Hiram Powers, the western-American sculptor.—  
His statue of Eve. — Fiesole. — Villa of Boccaccio. — View of  
Florence.—The Arno.—Dante.—Donay's.—Flower-girls.

Florence, May, 1842.

I HAVE suffered several days to elapse since my last letter, without having even looked towards a pen and ink. This has not, however, arisen from my having sat still, and seen nothing, but rather from my having seen so much, that no time was left to talk about it. Among many other agreeable occupations in which these days have been spent, there is one which has left an impression too pleasant not to make it the first thing that presents itself on returning to my writing-desk. The visit I am going to tell you of *might*, nay *must*, have been gratifying to anybody, but in a most especial manner it was so to me.

Rather more than ten years ago I became acquainted at Cincinnati, in Ohio, with a young man of the name of Powers; he was at that time an assistant to a Monsieur Dorfeuille, the ingenious proprietor of a whimsical museum, in which curi-

ous objects of Natural History, North-American antiquities, and historical groups of wax figures, were blended, and daily exhibited, for the amusement and edification of the *beau monde* of the western metropolis. The wax figures were moulded, or at any rate finished, by this young Mr. Powers, and there was a degree of talent displayed in this, that struck us all very forcibly, as being something greatly out of the common way. Encouraged, perhaps, by the opinions expressed by the European party, of his skill in modelling, he undertook a bust in such clay as he could find, and produced what struck us all as the most wonderfully-perfect likeness we had ever seen. . . . But we moved on, and heard no more of him. . . .

A few days after we arrived in Florence we were invited to visit the studj of some of the most distinguished artists at present working there. "A young American, called Powers," was among the names first mentioned, and the instant I heard the name, I felt not the slightest doubt that by going to his studio, I should meet my old acquaintance. Nor was I disappointed. There indeed I found the highly-gifted Hiram Powers, fully emerged from the boyish chrysalis' state, in which I had last seen him, into a full-fledged and acknowledged man of genius, in high fashion, overwhelmed with orders from wealthy patrons of all quarters of the globe, and with his rooms filled with admirable busts, all of them with more of that magical air of life

about them, which we see, and feel, in the works of the ancient sculptors, than any collection of modern marbles that I have ever visited. Of the astonishing likeness of many of these, I was well able to judge, and my instantly naming their originals, was a convincing proof that the resemblance must indeed have been great . . . . for I had seen none of them since I left America. But the subjects were men, not in early life, and the accurate artist had too well caught every accident of individual form, to leave the slightest doubt on my mind as I looked at them, that I had seen them before. To the majority of his subjects, I could not, however, apply this test, as they were wholly strangers to me; but there is a very mysterious sort of consciousness when looking at any imitation of the human face, whether in painting, or sculpture, not of *resemblance* . . . for of that we cannot be conscious when we have never seen the original, but of *truth*, which never fails to bring conviction to the mind that what we look upon, is faithfully copied; though none, perhaps, in the absence of this consciousness, would venture to deny a resemblance, they can never fail of believing in it when it is present. An artist may be very far from deserving to be classed among the journeymen who imitate nature in their portraits so abominably that none should know them, and yet be further still from that marvellous subtilty of observation, which seems to follow the

very blood as it flows, and the thoughts, which leave their flitting traces on the countenance. It is, however, when this is done, and then only, that the artist gives the world assurance of a man that has lived and breathed before him, so that even those are satisfied with the assurance, who never beheld the model from which he worked.

So is it, as I think, with Hiram Powers. His busts are life-like to a degree that made me look at him with wonder. When we left him at Cincinnati he was a lad who had seen nothing of any art but the art Divine which had formed the living creatures around him; and nothing but that intuitive faculty, without which, I presume, genius cannot exist, could have hurried him forward to the place he now holds among living artists.

Having examined all he had to show me, with equal surprise and pleasure, I ventured to ask him if he had never tried his hand upon any ideal work. "In marble?" he replied. "Yes," said I, "some group, not merely consisting of a portrait, but something imaginative?" He shook his head. "I am married, and have two children," he said. "For busts I have as many orders as I can execute. . . . I must not risk the loss of this lucrative business, in order to indulge myself in works of imagination. . . . If my success continue, I may, perhaps, in time, venture to attempt something of the kind. . . . But I cannot afford it yet."

"But do you not sometimes imagine compo-

sitions?" said I. "Do you not fancy things that you would like to execute?"

"Why, yes," he replied, smiling, "I certainly have fancied things that I should like to execute. . . . And I will show you one of them."

He then led the way to another room, and there, behind a screen, was a figure mounted on a pedestal, and I saw at once that it was a full length as large as life, though it was veiled from head to foot with a cloth. "Here," said he, pausing before he uncovered it, "is a figure in clay, on which I have bestowed some labour, and more thought. . . . But I dare not do it in marble. . . . I dare not try my chisel upon it . . . . unless I could get an order for the statue . . . . and I cannot hope for that as yet. . . . I mean it as a representation of Eve." He then withdrew the drapery that concealed it, and displayed an undraped female figure that I gazed upon with unfeigned astonishment. I have no words of art at my command which might enable you to conceive all the blended dignity and simplicity of this beautiful figure. In size, it is not beyond nature, but it is nature in very full perfection, and admirably well accords with the idea that it seems natural to conceive of the universal mother, and the model of woman, as she came from the hand of the Creator, before any accident of earth had tarnished her perfection. In her right hand she holds the fatal apple, and athwart the still heavenly composure of her fair face, one may

trace a slight shade of incipient anxiety, just sufficient to make one feel that she is not divine, but human. But what struck me in the composition, still more than the grace and loveliness, was the almost severe simplicity with which it is conceived and executed. There is in it something that gave me the idea of the pride of genius, that could not stoop to borrow a charm from look, or attitude, but trusted all to beauty, and to truth alone.

Powers watched, almost wholly in silence, the impression that his work made upon us; and when at length we turned away from it, he threw the veil again over it, saying with something like a sigh . . . . "I should like to do it."

Most heartily do I wish that some one may ere long look upon that Eve of clay with as sincere admiration as I did, and with money enough to boot, to command that she should immediately receive the immortality of marble . . . . for well does she deserve it!

\* \* \* \* \*

We have mounted the classic hill of Fiesole; and as yet I have seen nothing in Florence that so thoroughly sustains all my pre-conceived ideas of its greatness, as this commanding little mount. May I not call it classic, when we are told that Cicero and Sallust mention it? But perhaps *my* sort of classic reverence arises more from the moderns than the ancients. . . . Perhaps Milton, Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and our lyric Gray had more to do with



my musing, than Cicero, or Sallust either. The villa described by Boccaccio in the opening of the Decameron is on the road to it; and the very spot is pointed out where the lively refugees from the Florence pestilence, whose pastime has been the pastime of Europe for rather more than five hundred years, told their merry tales. So many more people know that Boccaccio wrote sometimes indelicately, than that sometimes he wrote without any such fault, and most admirably into the bargain, that I half doubt whether it be safe to mention him. . . . But Petrarch's devoted friendship, and the constant reference of our elder poets to his genius, as well as their eternal borrowings from the rich treasury of romance that he left behind him, may nevertheless make it lawful to remember him, and by no means necessary, while doing so, to remember at the same time anything that it is better to forget. . . . There be some . . . poetic spirits they . . . who fondly cling, even to an imaginary *memento* of scenes that have been sweetly sung in prose or rhyme; and some such declare that the very cypress-trees which now obtrude their crooked, bare, and mysteriously tangled roots above the soil, on the road to Fiesole, are the same trees, yea, identically the same trees, which spread their welcoming arms to shade and shelter the story-tellers immortalized by the Decameron. . . . Soon after passing this venerable cypress grove, you begin to mount the steep ascent that leads to the brow of this lofty,

and almost peaked Apennine. Till lately (that is within the last few years), the ascent has been a dangerous and difficult one for carriages; but now it is perfectly safe, and the difficulty to the horses so much lessened by its zig-zag course, that the most tender-hearted, and Martin-minded, can feel no drawback to the delight of being drawn with delicious slowness to its summit; or rather to the platform below the convent.... for beyond this I believe no carriage can ascend. And slow indeed should be the pace at which every step of that hill should be passed over!.... As the road mounts, and at every gaining tack expands the view below, a scene spreads out beneath the eye that I cannot easily believe could be equalled anywhere. Now it was that I saw Florence! Dante's Florence.... Galileo's Florence.... Michael Angelo's Florence.... The Florence of the Medici.... The centre of *cinquecento* glory, and the museum of *cinquecento* art! And then, the lustrous setting of this precious gem!.... the circling Apennine, with the incredible profusion of palace-like villas, that hang upon its rugged steeps, like

Jewels in an Ethiop's ear.

while, on the other side, the vale of Arno stretches out as far, and farther, than the eye can reach, clothed in all the richness of Italian vegetation.

It is not "from the top of Fiesole" that even the disappointing Arno can be criticised with seve-

city; for its winding course, catching the rays of the sun, looks as silvery and serpent-like as the heart could wish; and you need know nothing about the shallowness or the muddiness of its stream, or of the very large proportion of pebbles which its wide bed exposes to view when seen from less advantageous positions. Nor is it the river alone which appears to peculiar advantage when seen from this enchanting hill. Till I looked down upon it from Fiesole, I had thought the vegetation of the neighbourhood more abundant than beautiful. I am no admirer of the olive; not even its name can cheat me into liking it; nor does the vine, at this season at least, at all contribute to the graceful outline of the foliage with which the gay white villas are surrounded. But, when at Fiesole, I was in such good humour with everything, that I began to fancy even the slender *unmassive* masses of olive-trees, were not so very unpicturesque as they had seemed to me when I stood side by side with them; nay, I grew fanciful enough to think that there was something pretty in seeing them tremble and turn pale, as the ruffling zephyr passed over them; and I dare say that if I never chance to come near them again in such a position as to perceive their immense inferiority in outline and articulation of branches, to one and all of the indigenous forest-trees which flourish in our northern land, I may leave off abusing them for evermore.

The servant who attended the carriage was rather

an enthusiastic amateur cicerone, and after permitting us what he thought sufficient time to gaze from the terrace wall of the piazza, upon the matchless world below, he proposed that we should enter the venerable archiepiscopal church, which, he strenuously assured us, was very particularly well worth seeing. But at that moment it was impossible to rouse any spirit of *detail* antiquarianism amongst us. We had no objection, as we looked down upon the domes, the towers, and the bridges of the Tuscan Athens, to be antiquarian *en grand*, but we were in no humour then to listen to anything about the tombs of bishops and cardinals who had come up to Fiesole to be buried. We had no sympathy with them. We had come up for a very different purpose, and at length so far convinced the man of it, that he fell back, and said no more; but there was, from his demeanour, great reason to fear that he thought not very highly of us as "intelligent travellers."

This point being settled, we once more came forward to the terrace wall, and certainly did very completely enjoy the next half-hour. Query.... Would not the interest have been less, and therefore the pleasure less too, if the sight of the majestic city before us had *not* recalled the tyranny and oppression practised against the mighty man whose name is so mingled with the name of Florence as to render it impossible to look down for the first time over its turretted expanse without reading in it,

as in a dark volume, all his wrongs and all his sufferings? . . . . I declare to you that, as this question suggested itself, I felt very considerably ashamed of the doubt; but quieted my conscience by remembering that, however well we may love to have our spirits roused, and awakened, by tragic interest, it does not follow that we would not have stayed the tragedy had the choice been with us. . . . And then I looked down long, and earnestly, on the noble city he had "loved in vain," and truly and devoutly mourned in my heart of hearts the fate of him whom I hold to be (perhaps without *any* exception) the sublimest profane poet that ever lived. And how beautiful, how peaceful did this sinning Florence lie in the evening sunshine! And then what a busy, bustling succession of historic recollections came crowding over one another! But fear not, friend! . . . . I am not going to rehearse them to you. But was it possible to be thinking of Dante, and at the same time looking "at evening from the top of Fiesole" upon Florence in all the glory of the setting sun, without exclaiming—

"Fair is foul, and foul is fair?"

The drive down the hill is still more beautiful than the drive up it. . . . Besides now we had the decoration of such light as I believe Italy alone can show. There is something in the rose-coloured and violet hues that are seen here . . . . not in the clouds themselves, for that we have, in very fine

weather, more or less, in every country at the hour of sunset, but as here thrown upon the objects themselves, which is most strangely beautiful. We drove slowly, and before we reached Florence all this gold, ruby, amethyst, and sapphire had melted into grey, and then the short twilight sank almost into darkness, and as we drove over the beautiful bridge of La Trinità its statues looked like ghosts in the starlight.

It was just the hour for Donay's ; so to Donay's we went, and were consoled for having forsaken the cascina by finding rather more of the *beau monde* assembled there than could conveniently obtain the frozen sherbet, which in Italy seems to be almost a necessary of life after a hot day. But late as it was, the flower-girls were still at their posts, and again we were exposed to the pelting of the very sweetest shower in the world.

## LETTER X.

Alfieri.—“Mirra;” detestable in plot, interesting in performance.—Parties composed of all nations except Italians.—Absence of Lady H——.—No parties at the embassy.—Many private English families . . . but few of rank.—The Pitti gallery.—Venus of Canova.—Salvator Rosa’s Philosopher’s landscape.—La Madonna del Gran’ Duca ;—compared with La Fornarina.—Madame Catalani Valabrique.—Political conversation.—Italian politics.

I HAVE at length enjoyed what we have been at some trouble to procure, for, strange to say, it is not always, nor often, that the tragedies of Alfieri are performed here, and when at last we saw one advertised we immediately decided upon going to it, though the play, magnificent as it is, would not have been the one I should have selected, had choice been offered me. It was “Mirra,” one of the few unmitigated classic horrors, which the boldness of modern genius has ventured to bring before unclassic eyes. It would be equally idle and vain to attempt any conjecture as to why it was that Alfieri chose to throw out (might I not say throw away?) so much power, so much pathos, so much tenderness, and beauty, on a theme that must per-

force offend, and which forbids all possibility of sympathy. Might it not be, that, tyrant in heart, like all sticklers for freedom of his class, he scorned to submit himself to the laws by which others were ruled, and sat down to his hateful task determined to show that what he whimmed to will, that he had power to do? Must not the spirit in which this was written have been a little analogous to that in which Lord Byron determined to make a hero of his Corsair, and having so determined showed that he could make gentle ladies sigh in sympathy with a thief and murderer? Beyond all doubt it was a *tour de force*; but whether it were worth the trouble of performing may yet perhaps remain a question. The defenders of Alfieri's much more revolting fable urge in excuse that mysterious power of destiny, of which the poets of the heathen world made an agent, gifted as it should seem with an authority which was to exempt them from all laws of criticism, either poetical, or human; but I cannot admit the excuse, and think the great aristocratic Radical stands convicted both of a poetical and a moral offence!

The actors that I saw perform this frightful tragedy were far from being first-rate . . . yet were they not without merit either. Both Cinero and Mirra had an excellent conception of their parts. The latter, though no longer very young, contrived to give a great deal of very touching earnestness to the manner in which she pleads for, and hurries



on her nuptials with Peréo, from the moment that she decides upon accepting him :—

“Si ; pienamente in calma ormai tornata  
Cara Euricléa, mi vedi ; e lieta, quasi,  
Del mio certo partir” . . . .

was spoken with a mixture of innocent and sincere hope of finding relief from this decisive measure, and of profoundest melancholy for the necessity of it, that was worthy of Rachael. The acting of Cinero throughout was so simple, affectionate, and beautifully unsuspecting, as to create a greater interest than the part seemed capable of. . . . From her reception, it was evident that the Mirra was the star of the company, but her looking considerably older than her mother, was against her.

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After the play we went to a party, where we met many agreeable English, one or two French, one or two Russians, and one or two Germans . . . . all very agreeable . . . . but no Italians. . . . Our minister Lord H——d is at present living *en garçon*, and I hear of no parties at the embassy. Lady H——d is either at Rome or Naples, I forget which, in attendance on her mother, Lady C——, who has lately met with a severe accident. I am told that they receive as many Italians as English, so I presume that in the winter, when I understand that they give a large weekly *soirée*, it is no longer so impossible a thing to get sight of a native as I

find it now. . . . The drives around Florence are so beautiful, and the city itself contains such an almost exhaustless treasury of interest, that it is impossible I should wish myself anywhere else. . . . but I suspect that Florence, like all other capitals, can only be seen to advantage, as to its society at least, in the winter. A good many English families appear to be residing here, who seem, I think, chiefly to have come abroad for the sake of giving foreign masters to their young people; but there do not appear to be many English persons of rank abiding in the city, or even sojourning here. As far, however, as seeing galleries and churches, is an object, and to us it certainly is a great one, I believe we have timed our visit well; for every one I have conversed with on the subject agrees in assuring us that the cold here in winter is much too severe to render it either safe to the health, or agreeable to the feelings (physically speaking), to quit the fire-side in pursuit of statues, pictures, and monuments. At present perhaps, there are some who might think that there was something to fear from the other extreme. . . . But this is rarely an evil to me, and though I do not walk quite so much as I should like to do were the heat less, I enjoy the sunshine, and the exquisite race of flowers born therefrom, exceedingly.

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I am almost afraid to ask you to go with me to the Pitti again, lest you should fancy that I intend to turn myself into a catalogue, and then

insist upon your reading me. But I will do no such thing. Ah!....if you did but know what that Pitti palace gallery is, you would allow that, for an old lady recounting her adventures, I am the most considerate and forbearing that ever wagged a pen! Indeed it is a temptation, a very great temptation, as, one after another, all the glorious individuals of that lovely crowd rise up before me, to expatiate a little upon each. But it is dangerous....I know it is very dangerous. For in the first place, it is like one of those beguiling gallops up a gentle acclivity in which the prospect gets brighter and brighter as you ascend, and in which from the nature of the ground you are in no danger of losing wind yourself, though the unfortunate animal you ride may be well nigh ready to sink before you have half done with him. And moreover there is a sort of breach of trust in thus indulging oneself, that I hold to be very sinful. When you place this letter before you for the obliging purpose of reading it, do you not in some sort confide in me? Do you not, as it were, entrust a certain portion of your existence to my keeping? Are you not in my power?....and shall I abuse it?....Shall I keep you reading words that *cannot* create images to your fancy, merely that I may have the pleasure of writing what *can* recal images to mine? No, no, I will not do it!....But yet, as you well know, there is a golden mean in all things, and should you ever follow the course of my pre-

sent wanderings, you may find it useful to have heard where it is best to linger, and where to pass on. Most strongly I advise you never to pass on at the Pitti one jot more rapidly than you are obliged to do. The longer you stay the more you will feel, and know, that you had better stay longer still. I will not for my pledged word's sake talk to you any more about the great rooms that we have already passed through together; but only mention that at right angles with these are a set of smaller apartments, in which, as in the others, you may spend many happy hours, day after day returning to them, and invariably finding that the more you look at the pictures the better you like them!

In one of these rooms is the celebrated Venus of Canova. The effect of this statue upon me, was, in one respect, exactly the reverse of that produced by her Medicean relative. The *first* glance is the most enchanting, for so overpowering is the sense of her exceeding loveliness, that it is only by slow degrees that you become aware how far short she falls of the inconceivable truth of detail, which seems to give life to every particle of THAT OTHER statue; and also in that mysterious air of grace and purity which hovers round her gentle rival, like qualities distinct from form, and emanating from the genius of the sculptor, in a way that probably most can feel, but none can comprehend.

In these lesser rooms there is also a landscape by Salvator Rosa . . . more than one, by the way,

and all admirable . . . but especially there is one which, in a totally different style, is as exquisite as the great Water landscape which I have before mentioned. This is completely a forest scene; and if ever painter could give so interesting a quality to his canvass as to beguile the gazer at it into forgetting where he stood, hurling his

———“Dazzling spells into the spongy air,  
Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion,”

Salvator has done it here. You seem to breathe the atmosphere that he has painted, and to hear the movement of the leaves and boughs. This magnificent picture is known by the name of The Philosopher's Landscape. The possession of these two master-pieces of this greatest of landscape painters, is enough of itself to place this collection above any other that I have seen. There is yet another picture of which I must say a word, and that, not for the pleasure of talking about it, but because, if I was rightly informed, it was only the accident of its being placed in the room where we saw it for the purpose of being copied, which led to our seeing it there at all; but by a special order it may be seen I understand at any time, in the place where it usually hangs. . . . this place is the Grand Duke's bed-room, and this picture of pictures is the Raphael, known by the name of the Madonna del Gran' Duca. I rather suspect that in many respects this is the most perfect picture I have ever

seen. In the first place it is in a state of preservation which is only to be hoped for when you meet pictures *at home*, in the atmosphere wherein they were born, and in custody which has never permitted even their native air to visit them too roughly. The tints of this Madonna del Gran' Duca may perhaps be something mellowed by the three centuries and a half, or nearly as much, which have elapsed since it was painted, but excepting this, the picture is precisely as it came from the hand of the master. The finish of this picture is, in its way, as extraordinary as that of the Medicean Venus; and the exquisite delicacy, refinement, and almost *piccolezza* in the forms of both, might lead one to suppose that when an artist of the very first order, whether Greek or Italian, set himself to produce what he held to be the *beau idéal* of feminine loveliness, it was not so much what we call expression, as refinement, that he sought to pourtray. It is not very easy to imagine a greater contrast than between the countenance of the Fornarina, and that of this Madonna del Gran' Duca. The first has almost too much expression. . . . the features indicate, or at any rate show their power of indicating, strong passions; whereas the divinity of the last, seems to consist in the beauteous tranquillity which marks the absence of all passion. If instead of giving the name of *Venus* to "the statue that enchants the world," she had been called a *nymph*, there would, I think, have been a greater mixture of sentiment

in the admiration she inspires. I could imagine a whole host of delicate virtues floating round this Medicean figure, and purifying the very air through which one looks at her; but all such pretty fancies are driven away, blushing, and discomfited, upon hearing her name . . . . and as long as she bears this name, there seems something approaching to sacrilege in comparing her to the Madonna. But call her a *nymph*, and I will say that she, too, has an air of such blessed indifference as Mrs. Barbauld was thinking of when she wrote her ode.

Had Raphael a living model for this delicate work, or was it a dream? . . . . And the child? Did any mere "mortal mixture of earth's mould" ever look so heaven-born as this? . . . . Is the process, the mere mechanical process, by which this virgin, and child, was produced, lost? . . . . Is there anything like it? . . . . anything that in a remote degree approaches the soft round finish of these dainty limbs? . . . . If there be, I have yet to see it, and I know not which way to look that I may find it."

And now, if I can help it, I will talk to you no more about the pictures of the Pitti palace? . . . . and if I keep my word you must give me credit for some forbearance, for I certainly do not mean to leave off looking at them.

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Instead of going as usual to the Cascina after dinner yesterday, I was taken a mile or two out of Florence to pay a visit from which I promised

myself great pleasure, and received more. . . . I went to see Europe's umwhile wonder and delight, Madame Catalani Valabrique. She is residing in a very beautiful villa, which stands in the midst of an extensive *podere* of which she is the owner. Nothing could be more amiable than the reception she gave us. I think, of all the nations who joined in the universal chorus in praise of her high character, her charming qualities, and her unequalled talent, she loves the English best. . . . perhaps they best understand her worth; and the rare superiority of a mind that in the midst of flattery and adulation which really seem to have known no limits, preserved all its simple purity and goodness unscathed. I was equally surprised and pleased to see to what an extraordinary degree she had preserved her beauty. Her eyes and teeth are still magnificent, and I am told that when seen in evening full dress by candle-light, no stranger can see her for the first time without inquiring who that charming-looking woman is. A multitude of well-behaved reasons would have prevented me, especially at this my first introduction, from naming the very vehement desire I felt once more to hear the notes of a voice that had so often enchanted me. Perhaps if I had not seen her looking so marvelously young and handsome, the idea might neither have seized upon, nor tormented, me so strongly as it did; but as it was, I certainly never longed more, perhaps never so much, to hear her sing as I now



did. Her charming daughter, Madame de V—— was sitting near me, and I think I ventured to ask her if her mother ever sang now. To which she most gaily and promptly answered in the affirmative . . . . and then . . . . what happened next I hardly know . . . . I am afraid that I must have said something about my secret longings . . . . for the daughter whispered a few words to the mother, and in a moment Madame Catalani was at the piano . . . . No, in her very best days, she never smiled a sweeter smile than she did then, as she prepared to comply with the half-expressed wishes of a stranger, who had no claim upon her kindness but that of being an Englishwoman. I know not what it was she sang; but scarcely had she permitted her voice to swell into one of those *bravura* passages of which her execution was so very peculiar, and so perfectly unequalled, than I felt as if some magical process was being performed upon me which took me back again to something . . . . I know not what to call it . . . . which I had neither heard nor felt for nearly twenty years. Involuntarily, unconsciously, my eyes filled with tears, and I felt as much embarrassed as a young lady of fifteen might do, who suddenly found herself in the act of betraying emotions which she was very far indeed from wishing to display.

“ Mais que cela est drôle ! ” exclaimed Madame de V——, laughing . . . . “ Voilà ce qu’ arrive toujours. Ceux qui ont bien connu la voix de ma-

man, autrefois, ne sauraient la voir maintenant, sans vouloir l'entendre chanter . . . . et . . . . dès qu'ils ont entendu quelques notes . . . . voilà qu'ils pleurent!"

I was, as you may believe, considerably comforted by learning that others had shown themselves as weakly impressionable as myself; and rallying as well as I could, I endeavoured to make the dear, kind magician understand, that the effect she produced was to the very highest degree pleasurable, instead of the reverse. And so in truth it was. . . . But I must address myself to those who have felt the same cause produce the same result, before I can hope to be fully understood in describing it. It was not the feeling often produced by hearing, after long interval, some strain with which our youth was familiar, for I doubt if I ever heard the notes before . . . . but it was the sort of peculiar unique Catalani thrill, which I do not believe anybody ever can forget who has heard it once, and of which no one can form a very adequate idea who has never heard it all. Were I to tell you that the magnificent compass of Madame Catalani's voice, was the same as heretofore, and all the clear violin notes of it quite unchanged, you would probably not believe me; but you may venture to do so, I do assure you, without scruple, when I declare, that she still executes passages of the extremest difficulty, with a degree of skill that might cause *very* nearly all her successors in the science, to pine with

envy, and moreover give up the competition in despair.

When she had with indescribable good humour and sweetness of manner, delighted us in this way for awhile, she left her seat at the instrument, and placed her daughter in it, who has indeed a charming voice, but she seems to play with it, as with a trinket whose value is a matter of indifference to her . . . . singing us various little French ballads, as never were French ballads sung before. . . . . Madame Catalani's eldest son, who seems to love her as such a mother deserves to be loved, is living with her, as her *podestà*, her friend, and most dear companion ; Madame de V—— likewise appeared *domiciliée* with her excellent mother. . . . . The youngest son, also spoken of as highly estimable, is in the army, and with his regiment. The dwelling of Madame Catalani is extremely beautiful, being a large mansion, containing some very splendid rooms, and situated, like all other Florentine villas, in a spot of great beauty, commanding very extensive views among the picturesque hollows of the neighbouring Apennines, with the ever bright-looking villas scattered among them. This quiet residence is in truth a retreat of great beauty, and such a home as well pleases the fancy as the chosen scene of repose for one who has passed through many feverish interludes of gay and fashionable life ; but with a heart and soul so wholly uninjured thereby, as to render the quietly looking back upon them more

That a native of Italy should seek Italian air in which to breathe through the autumn and winter of life, is not very extraordinary ; yet, nevertheless, I believe Madame Catalani so truly loves England, that her finally leaving it would have been attended by very lasting regrets, were it not that she has so chosen her retreat as yearly to enable *troupes* of pilgrims from the country that so affectionately adopted her, to reach her hospitable threshold, and to ask and receive the pleasant boon of recognition. Her visitors in this way have counted among them the noblest and the best ; and the manner in which her name is mentioned here, furnishes another proof, if any new proof were wanting, that, bad as the world is said to be, those who have so lived in it as to deserve respect, invariably find it.

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I brought with me to Florence a letter of introduction from a distinguished Italian, residing for the present on the un-sunny side of the Alps, which has procured for me a long and very interesting conversation. This letter was to a gentleman advanced in years, and one who, though of high patrician rank, of ample revenues, and distinguished political station, has not passed through the stirring hurricane that has been blowing through the world for the last half century, without feeling its influence upon his spirit ; though, fortunately for him, his lot was not cast where *thinking* was declared to be a process absolutely contrary to law. I have

heard some anecdotes concerning him, equally honourable to himself, and to those who had *power*, if *will* had not been wanting, to make him feel how perilous it has been rendered by those great arch enemies of human reason, the French revolutionists, for a good citizen to *speak* what he thinks. However, in his case neither his thinking nor speaking have done him any harm, as he remains in the position in which it pleased Heaven to place him, without having ever compromised his freedom as a man, or his fidelity as a subject. Were such instances multiplied, Italy would look more proudly in the eyes of Europe.

It is impossible to converse with this gentleman without perceiving that his mind has formed and still clings to the hope that the country of which his happy Tuscany makes part, will rise from the degradation into which it has been plunged by a multitude of causes, internal and external. . . . Many of these causes are so obvious, that the most heedless observer may trace them ; but there are others which are less so, and these perhaps not the least important, which are, I suspect only to be learned by listening to the unreserved communications of such men as my new acquaintance ; men who have been sufficiently actors on the political stage of the country in which they live, to be well acquainted with what is going on both before and behind the scenes, and who have had courage and talent to make their part a marked one, yet without falling

into such turbulent vehemence, as to cause themselves to be hissed off. I say not this, however, as meaning to reproach those whose lot has fallen on worser ground . . . nay, so fluctuating do I find my judgment of what is politically wrong, or politically right, as I listen to the living voices of those whom I now meet *ça et là*, and who speak of the evils that they have seen, known, and felt, that I am most unfeignedly afraid to form any opinion at all. I must perhaps except, however, that very comfortable one which teaches me to feel more, and more, and more again, as I continue my rambles through the world, that the Constitution of ENGLAND when guarded with common prudence from the democratic innovations which have of late years buzzed about it . . . like stray wasps from a nest set in motion at a distance . . . is the only one which appears to be formed in reasonable, honest, and holy conformity to the freedom of man as a human being, and to the necessary restraint inevitable upon his becoming one of a civilized, social compact. So firmly convinced am I of this fact, that I sometimes wish for a moment (no longer, observe) that I were the native of another country, yet knowing all I do about my own, that I might speak my opinion without being suspected of suffering from that *maladie du pays*, which makes Frenchmen believe themselves a nation of philosophers, and Americans conceive that they are in the last and most advanced stage of civilization.

But I have trotted off from my Florentine acquaintance I hardly know how, and in looking back to find him I meet with a phrase that requires a word of commentary. When speaking of information to be gained from the unreserved communications of such an individual, I by no means intend to infer that I possessed this advantage. Far, indeed, am I from fancying anything of the kind. A mind like his is a treasury not to be lightly, or carelessly, opened to every passer-by who might like to snatch a few thoughts from it. Nevertheless I could not converse with him, even as I did, without perceiving that he was one of the very few who may safely be listened to on the strangely-complicated subject of Italian politics, for he speaks equally without fear and without passion. Whether he has always been as calm an observer may, perhaps, be doubted: but now he seems to look down upon the great Continental drama, from the vantage-ground of a philosophy which appears to preserve him equally from the thralldom that would subjugate opinion, and the rashness that might render opinion dangerous if acted upon in the present state of things.

As a Tuscan, however, it must be allowed that he has, comparatively speaking, little cause for political complaint. I do not mean to say that every Tuscan subject can claim and hold fast, as his indefeasible right, the English privilege of thinking and of avowing his thoughts. This privilege is, perhaps, the

highest point to which civilization, properly so called, can reach; for it proves both the fearless stability of the government, and the unshackled freedom of the governed; but short of this, the subjects of Tuscany can wish for but little practical change in the mild and truly paternal government of their country. It is urged, however, by those not exactly of Tuscany perhaps but of less happy states, that no government can be a good one, which depends upon the individual character of the reigning sovereign for its good or bad effects upon the people. This is in principle so undeniably true, that it would be like supporting a paradox to deny it. And yet such is the condition to which blood-thirsty, half-mad, revolutionary demagogues have brought the reasonable doctrine of progressive improvement, that there is hardly a truly good and wise man to be found, who will not confess that there is very frightful reason to fear any change by way of remedy, lest it should turn out worse than the disease. I suspect that the best hope for the sufferers under the heavy calamity of bad government, lies in the sure and perhaps not very slow influence of public opinion. This influence is as likely, it may be, to extend to the educated prince as to the uneducated peasant; and when this happens, instead of being driven, he leads. What is the state of Prussia at this moment, but an exemplification of this doctrine? Tuscany may be quoted as another. . . . There are certainly more ways than



one in which national improvements may be brought about. Where men are goaded to resistance, like our bold barons by the tyrant John, we know that a very wholesome charter may be obtained, and that without any of the horrors attending upon popular revolution . . . and no means, I conceive, can be more sure, eventually, to overthrow the very childish tyranny that makes *thought* contraband, than the continuing to make that tyranny felt among the EDUCATED CLASSES. When a remedy for existing abuses is to be brought about by *sans-culottes* and *poissardes*, it can, of course, only be achieved by brutal force; such being the only power of which they have the possession . . . but it ought to be, and it will be otherwise, when the work is to be done by the well-informed and thoughtful part of the people. . . . This sort of process, indeed, cannot be brought to perfection either in three days, or in three months. But the question is not, for Italy, which is the most rapid, or even the most advantageous cure, but which is the most possible. The horror inspired in the minds of all men by the sub-human atrocities of the French Revolution, has not, thank Heaven! yet subsided, and the very natural result of it is, that any country holding itself liable to be affected, even by the mere neighbourhood of something similar, joins heart and hand to prevent it. This will probably suffice, in the way of physical force, (as long as this strong preventive feeling shall endure,) to render any popular movement abortive;

but, on the other hand, this foreign coercion pushes forward with a strength for ever increasing, the powerful current of popular feeling, which *will* work its way by that species of "blow high, blow low" influence that no bayonets, either foreign or domestic, can check, any more than the interference of the police could prevent a thunder-storm.

## LETTER XI.

Royal Villas.—The simplicity of their decoration.—Poggio di Cajano.—Pic-nic.—Dinner at Mr. Greenough's. — Discussion on Sculpture.—The Church of San Lorenzo.—Chapel of the Tombs.—Tomb of Cosmo the First, "Father of his country."—Chapel of the Medici.—Laurentian Library.—Virgil.—The Pandects.—Boccaccio. — Petrarch. — Dante. — Galileo's finger. — Michael Angelo.

Florence, May, 1841,

ONE, among many of the pretty, and peculiar, features of Florence is the number of her royal villas, which flank the city, and at no great distance from it, in almost every direction. There is not one of these that does not boast its legend of historic interest, which, together with the beauty of the pretty gardens, and the magnificent views either of Florence, of the wavy Apennines, or of both, render them all objects of attraction, though they have none of them any great splendour of decoration to boast of; being, with the exception, perhaps, of the Austrian Schonbrun, the simplest royal residences that I remember to have seen.

We spent the greater part of a bright, yet tolerably temperate day, last week at one of these, called the Poggio di Cajano. It was here that the

fair and faithless Bianca Capello is supposed, together with her lover, to have been murdered . . . . and it was here that, for a while, before returning to the more congenial air of Versailles, Margaret of Orleans retreated from the grave society of her not too well-beloved lord, Duke Cosmo the Third. This palace has nothing to boast except its beautiful views, and some interesting old historic paintings both on the walls and ceilings, executed by the order of Leo the Tenth, who seems to have been particularly fond of the place. It was not, however, the palace itself, notwithstanding all these sources of interest, which was our principal object ; for being almost *blasés* with records of the past, pursued unremittingly from day to day in the city, we felt disposed to enjoy the less intellectual pleasures of the present, in a *dîner sur l'herbe* in the gardens, which are not adjoining to the palace, but at the distance, I think, of at least a mile below the hill. They are, I believe, meant to be very English, being a mixture of grass (not turf), trees, and water ; and though deficient in many of the features which, partiality apart, distinguish our gardens from all others in the world, they are extremely pretty and agreeable. The party though not Italian was not English, consisting of Russian, German, Swedish, French, and English individuals, and proved to be particularly chatty, and pleasant. Part of our day's amusement consisted in punting ourselves about upon a delicately-bridged and weeping-willow-

shaded canal, which would have been more agreeable had not some millions of mosquitoes taken it into their heads to seek pastime there as well as ourselves. . . . We did not, however, dispute the matter long with them, but yielding to the majority betook ourselves to our rustic dinner-table, where we found all the consolation we could desire.

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We were yesterday at a very pleasant dinner-party at the house of Mr. Greenough, the American sculptor, where we had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Everett, his celebrated countryman. The conversation at table deserved the name much better than is often the case, particularly when several of the party are entirely strangers to each other; . . . and among other themes we had an extremely interesting discussion on the subject of Art in general, and Sculpture in particular. The question so often mooted as to the source of the superiority in ancient over modern art, was long dwelt upon, and handled with considerable taste and *savoir*. Some traced it to the elevation of the imagination, and the strength and vigour of the inventive faculty, at a period when it was untamed by the everyday routine of exhausting labour, to which it was too often submitted now . . . while others protested that the imagination was in a state of progressive education, and that the material upon which it had to work, was made up of all that successive ages taught, and all the accumulated thoughts which past ages had left

behind them. . . . If this be so, it either follows that the artists of to-day ought to excel all those who went before them, or else that imagination is *not* the faculty from which the great masters of antiquity drew their inspiration . . . and more than one among us held a doctrine not only opposed to the belief that the faculty of imagination was that on which they drew for inspiration, or excitement, but that it was precisely the absence of it which led to that wondrous perfection which every succeeding age seems to vie with its predecessors in admiring. This un-imaginative party of reasoners declared that truth, and not fancy, was the well-spring of their superiority. Living amidst forms of great beauty and in an atmosphere that showed all form to advantage, the Greeks, when they took it into their heads to make a statue, set all their wit to work to make it as closely resemble the original as possible. It was, these reasoners said, the faithful accuracy, the minute truth of their imitations, which, together with the able handicraft arising from constant practice, produced what now appears to us so almost miraculous. If this latter theory be true, and I am strongly tempted to suspect it is so, my friend Hiram Powers is in the right road. The only objection I ever heard uttered against his Eve was, that the figure wanted imagination. Change but the phrase a little, and I am perfectly ready to agree in the remark. I am prepared to allow that as small a portion as possible of imagination went to

the producing it, but I am not prepared to allow that it *wants* any.

The clay represents a woman .... truly, naturally, accurately; and I do really believe that whoever may live to see that admirable mimic reality of female loveliness chiseled in pure marble, will feel a wonderfully near approach to what he may have felt in contemplating an ancient statue. .... It is this same perfection of truth which renders the portrait-busts of Powers so admirable, and I have, in fact, more than once heard them criticised as being too true .... For a very ugly man is very positively ugly in his bust, when it comes from the hands of Powers; and worse still perhaps, even the "counterfeit presentment" of a woman, coming from his *studio*, is likely to bear the exact resemblance of the features that God gave her, and no better. If vanity, therefore, be the only or the prime mover in the business of ordering a bust, there be other artificers in white marble who may do better than the sculptor of Eve. ... But if affection, or a genuine love of truth in art, be the feeling which seeks gratification, I greatly doubt if any second can be found who would do as well.

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We devoted this morning to the church, chapels, and library of San Lorenzo. The Church, though sufficiently large and handsome, would not be remarked as pre-eminently so, among the multitude of fine churches in Florence, were it not for its

connexion with two chapels of peculiar interest . . . . The one being the splendid mausoleum of the Medici family, originally planned by Cosmo the First, and the second containing two of the most celebrated groups existing, from the revered chisel of Michael Angelo. These groups adorn the tombs of two of the Medicean race, and have given to this portion of the edifice the well-known name of the Chapel of the Tombs. One of these monuments is that of Giuliano di Medici, and the other of Lorenzo. Of these two majestic tombs every voice speaks praise ; nor is it possible for the most insensible to stand in their presence without feeling that genius of the very highest order has been at work around him. But it has pleased that mighty Genius so to sport with the minds of the unborn millions who were destined for age after age to come in pilgrimage, and do homage before the shrines he has erected, that no two of them seem perfectly to agree as to the meaning of the powerfully-mysterious figures he has here conjured out of stone. For myself I can say, with very perfect and simple sincerity, that exactly so much as the pleasure I felt in looking at them fell short of what I expected, so much was the value of my own judgment lowered thereby in my own estimation. I had not, however, the misfortune of finding myself altogether insensible to the vigour of life and movement given to some of the figures, nor to the exquisitely perfect repose in which the great magician



thought fit to enchain another of them . . . . nor did I forget the four charming lines in which this last-named figure is described :—

“ *La Notte* che tu vedi in sì dolci atti  
Dormir, fu da un Angelo scolpita  
In questo sasso, e perchè dorme, ha vita ;  
Destala, se nol credi, e parleratti.”

Nor was I unaware of their descriptive aptitude to the firmly-sleeping marble. . . . But this sort of separate and individual admiration, does not in the slightest degree assist in disentangling the disagreeable confusion of intellect into which the general design, first of one tomb, and then of the other, is calculated to throw so matter-of-fact a person as myself. As to the AUTHORITIES, the critics *par excellence*, they seem to me to have made the matter a thousand times worse by all their explanations. . . . In their hands confusion has become worse confounded, and unintelligibility a thousand times more unintelligible. If Michael Angelo himself did really call these statues Day and Night, Twilight and Daybreak, I am persuaded he did it in very cruel sport, on purpose to set the witty and the wise talking nonsense about them. He might quite as well have called them Anthony and Cleopatra, Solomon and the queen of Sheba, or any other he's and she's that happened to occur to him.

“ It is good to have a giant's strength, but tyrannous  
To use it like a giant.”

And of this species of tyranny I do certainly think

the immortal Michael Angelo Buonarroti was often guilty. Was it not more the abuse than the lawful use of power, which so perpetually led him to leave unfinished works of such majestic conception, that he well knew the mere *ébauche* of his thought upon the stone was enough to make it one of the wonders and treasures of his own day, and the almost worshiped relic of posterity? . . . a worship not the less likely to be profound because its object was incomprehensible.

Yet, after all, it cannot be denied that these far-famed monuments cannot be looked at with any feeling in the least degree approaching to indifference, and it is, perhaps, only the excess of the interest they inspire which produces such a feverish, restless anxiety to know what was in truth the artist's purpose, when he gave such powerful expression, and action so strongly marked, to figures that people have agreed to call Evening and Morning, Day and Night!

The lords of the creation have taken the liberty of establishing many a harsh-sounding *dictum* respecting the ladies of the creation, some of which may happen to be true . . . and of such I account that which says that a woman's judgment (poor thing!) must always be got at by attacking her feelings, and not her reason. That this is very often true I do most pathetically believe, and on no occasion more than on works of art. Nay, I am inclined in my honest sincerity to go a step

farther, and to declare that if the origin of the judgments she forms be in her feelings, its index is less intellectual still, for it is to be found in her nerves. . . . Thus, when a clever man reads, a poem, contemplates a statue, looks at a picture, or listens to music that he likes, his noblest faculties arouse themselves; he looks wiser and feels stronger than he looked and felt before, from the conscious power of appreciating and judging the work before him. . . . Whilst the clever woman, clever in her allotted proportion and degree, not unfrequently on the same occasions finds tears in her eyes, and a very queer sort of fluttering at her heart, while her usually smooth skin becomes nearly resembling, in apparent texture, that of a goose, (oh! ominous resemblance!) so that upon some occasions the poet might be quoted more literally than he wrote, and

“ One might almost say her body thought.”

Now whenever this goose-like sort of thinking takes place within us, we are ever ready to declare that what produces it is fine. . . . And I believe also, by the way, that, trusting to this unsublime criterion, we are generally right. . . . By this criterion, therefore, if by no other, I left this chapel *de' Depositi*, without falling in any degree under the imputation of having looked round it with indifference. . . . But this shall not make me deny that I think the architecture of the chapel itself,

though the production of the same mighty Michael Angelo, is ugly and graceless in the extreme, and I could not but wish that he had taken a fancy for leaving it as unfinished as the figure which folks are pleased to call Day, for then the imagination might supply the rest, and I really think it would be difficult to fancy any reasonable alteration that would not be an improvement. Yet I know this chapel is highly lauded by the infallibility-worshippers of the "angelic" name so prettily cited in the lines I just now transcribed for you. There be those who call it one of his best works. Alas! if it be so, what will become of all the delight I have anticipated from looking at the dome of St. Peter's? . . . . The Church of San Lorenzo itself, has at least one very interesting monument in it, namely, that inscribed to the memory of the first Cosmo, recognised everywhere by his glorious cognomen of "FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY." This title has been too long and too generally accorded to him, to run any danger of being lost, even though attacked by the powerful pen of Sismondi. His name, with this title annexed, together with his age (seventy-five years) is inscribed on a flat stone in the centre of the building. A rich pavement of serpentine and porphyry surrounds it, and beneath this pavement is his body laid. Behind the choir is the gorgeous chapel erected as the mausoleum of the Medici race, and said to have been built after the designs of one of that

illustrious family, Don Giovanni, brother to Duke Ferdinand the first. It is surmounted by a vast octangular cupola, the effect of which is not such as to make one rejoice in its variation from the usual form, recalling disagreeably the idea of one of those angular tabernacles which young ladies often construct in pasteboard to enshrine their embroidery. It is impossible for the imagination of man, or of woman either, with all her natural abundance of pretty ornamental notions, to conceive anything more elaborately rich than the walls of this sepulchral chapel. They are encrusted from top to bottom with every known variety of the most precious marbles, amongst which jasper is seen in the most extraordinary abundance. The arms of all the principal Tuscan cities are inlaid in the centre panels of these marvellous walls in materials still more precious, and the general effect is more in the style of the Aladdin-lamp architecture than anything I remember to have seen. This chapel is said to have been in progress for above two hundred years, but we were told that it was now expected to be completed in a few months. There is a good life-like statue in one of the niches, by John of Bologna.

From this gorgeous marble sanctuary we proceeded to the Laurentian Library, known to the book-learned throughout all ages, from its first formation to the present day, as familiarly as their own bibles and prayer-books. Of course it is su-

perfluous to say that this well-known collection contains nothing but manuscripts; and assuredly if one is obliged by the regulations of civilized travelling to devote a certain portion of time to the examination of books, without either the intention or the possibility of reading a single page in any of them, it is much better to fall among manuscript volumes than any other. In this venerable library of St. Lawrence there are, questionless, many that it is impossible not to look at with a lively interest. . . . Who can see the oldest manuscript of Virgil extant, and not feel that exciting species of curiosity, which it is a sort of glory to feel, and to indulge? And then the Pandects! . . . The original, and great grandfather of all the Pandects past, present, and to come! Who can cast a glance upon such volumes, and not do it reverently? . . . volumes so marvellously written, and so marvellously preserved! . . . With less of reverence, but perhaps more of interest, we examined by the kind indulgence of the guardian, aye, and pored over them too, Mannelli's copy of the Decameron, transcribed in 1384. . . . a Horace which belonged to Petrarch; and which has some few lines scribbled in it here and there by the Tuscan poet . . . and more than one venerable copy of Dante. . . . but nothing in his autograph, which the librarian assured us did not exist. Besides these, and various other interesting manuscripts, we saw many highly curious illuminations, the most beautiful of which were those in the

**Missal** from the Convent degli Angeli. At one end of the room, placed in considerable state upon a pedestal, and enclosed in a glass-case, is a finger of Galileo, which was stolen from the coffin when the body was removed from the unsanctified ground of the Piazza of Santa Croce into the interior of the building.

The room which contains this rich manuscript library is very beautiful, and is the work of Michael Angelo. The coloured glass windows, painted by a pupil of Raphael, are elegant in themselves, and produce a peculiarly good effect from the size and form of the room. The staircase, also said to be the work of Michael Angelo, has still the scaffolding remaining at one part of it which he erected; doubtless left there from reverence to the hand that placed but did not remove it. Nothing can be more agreeable, or more sure to awaken sympathy, than such traces of the love and respect of after-ages for the great men who have preceded them. But I could not help smiling at this very appropriate offering to the *manes* of Michael Angelo. If anything in the world can typify an *unfinished* state of things, it is surely the presence of a scaffolding; and the suffering this to remain in his honour, being, as it is, so hideously ugly, and disfiguring to the approach of the venerable room above, does look very like the indulgence with which we treat even the naughty whims of

a petted child. Let us hope that his erratic spirit, when wandering in the precincts of his greatest Tuscan glory, smiles now and then, complacently, as it beholds this sentimental but queer offering to his well-known predilection for leaving work unfinished!



## LETTER XII.

Galleries of the Uffizj.—Statues.—Pictures.—Want of Seats.—Schools of Painting.—Modern Sculpture.—John of Bologna's Mercury.—Ghiberti's Prize piece.—Antique Bronzes.—The Chimera.—Objects enclosed in cases.—Hall of Baroccio . . . of the Venetian School.—Hall of the Niobe.—Mr. Cockerell.—Copy of the Laocoon.—Michael Angelo's Bacchus.

Florence, May, 1841.

WE have not suffered all the days that have elapsed since we first visited the Tribune in the Medicean Museum, to pass without returning to examine the multitude of other treasures contained within its expansive walls. I find, however, that it is impossible, without keeping a regular diary, which I never could do in my life, to record day-by-day all that we see and do, and you must, therefore, be pleased to accept the best approach to it that I can contrive to achieve. In revisiting the Uffizj I will not say that we quite succeeded in passing the door of the Tribune without entering, but we gave scarcely more than a look and then passed on. The long gallery itself which follows the colonnade below, presents a narrow front to the Arno on one side, which has public offices beneath it, and is

supported on the basement by a very handsome portico, with arches towards the Gran' Piazza, over the centre of which is placed John of Bologna's statue of Cosmo the First. The gallery, after turning over this fine portico, begins again in a straight line, which reaches to the same length as that already traversed (in which the Tribune of the Venus is situated), and looks down at its termination on the roof of the Loggia dei Lanzi. All this is very spacious, and very handsome, but as a gallery it certainly cannot be compared in beauty to that of the Louvre. It is, however, most superbly decorated with antique busts and statues, which stretch in solemn lines on either side....uninterrupted, save by the doors which lead to different cabinets, for the entire extent of the three divisions; and these marbles taken as a *coup-d'œil*, from any one point, very greatly exceed in dignity of general effect, all the pictures that could possibly be exhibited. To lead you round this fine collection, piece by piece, is quite out of the question; yet many, I think I could say the majority of them, appeared to me so admirable that, were it not for my wholesome fear of wearying you, I could find it in my heart to be very tedious. Through the whole of this enormous length, on that side at least which is opposite the windows, the walls are covered with pictures which, though they certainly did not, for the most part, strike me as being good for much, were, nevertheless, especially the earlier part of

them, exceedingly interesting, from being hung chronologically, and so offering, almost at a glance, something like a history of early painting. The first part of this series must be of considerable value, as it comprises pictures by Rico, Cimabue, Giotto, and Memmi, his pupil; Gaddi; and several others, precious at least for their high antiquity, if for nothing else. There is also in these spacious corridors a seemingly endless series of painted portraits, representing all the worthies, and the unworthies too, I should suppose, of the Florentine Republic, a grim and wearisome collection, that I conceive no human eye ever attempted to follow, unless it were some unhappy catalogue-maker, who had no choice permitted him.

As to the statues, and the almost speaking imperial busts (which form *another* series in this systematic collection), I can only say that to one who has never before stood in the presence of so much marble life, they produce, at the first glance, an effect almost awfully impressive. But after the first glance, one wishes . . . . at least I did . . . . that they were separated and placed apart, so that one might enjoy the exceeding pleasure arising from that steady sort of examination which brings out to the mind as well as to the eye, all the meaning as well as all the skill of the artist. These statues, and these busts are, of course, of very unequal merit, yet are there none, as it seemed to me, that have so little but that I would joyfully welcome

them at home, where there is a more, "plentiful lack" of this species of intellectual fruit than of any other.... And as to the best among them, though *here* it may be that the petted eye and pampered taste can be fully satisfied with nothing short of the perfection to be found in the Tribune, I declare to you that, give me a comfortable chair, a footstool, and a favouring light, and I would ask no better pastime than ~~to~~ to sit for hours together making acquaintance with their various tempers. How exquisite the beautiful repose of some!.... How wonderful the breathing life of others!.... How subtle the art with which the most elaborate drapery is made to fall with such careless laxity in its copious folds, that it is almost difficult to believe the garment does not hang, and that its own gravity alone produces those gracious outlines, amidst which the eye so delights to lose itself! Oh! it is a wondrous art! and to those not "blinded by excess of light," that is to say, not too extreme in the fastidiousness arising from the exclusive love of that alone which is the very best, this gallery has wherewithal to occupy, and delight, for many days. I would, however, that some humane speculator on the causes of human joy and woe, would dedicate an eloquent little essay to the generous-hearted Grand Duke upon the different degrees of enjoyment arising from contemplation in a state of rest and in a state of unrest.... And I do truly believe that the consequence of such an

appeal would be the glorious acquisition of two or three dozen of moveable seats, scattered throughout these enormous corridors. To the elastic limbs that have not yet skipped through thirty summers, this may perhaps be a matter of little moment, . . . but to *nous autres* it is far otherwise; nay, I suspect that many a fair tourist, who may still have sundry summers to pass through ere she arrive at the sum above named, might be as thankful as her seniors for the relief of an occasional five minutes of repose, when occupied in what so greatly draws upon the strength of both mind and body.

If you are determined to give an examination, as leisurely as they deserve, to the marbles in the corridors, you must set about it with steadfast fixedness of purpose, or you will be decoyed away into some or into all of the tempting chambers that open upon your left, as you advance. On the right hand the space is entirely occupied by the windows; before which however, an unbroken line of statues and of busts continues the whole way. But of these tempting chambers, if not unfortunately hurried by want of time, I should say that not above one or two should be taken on the same day, as it is quite impossible to form an adequate idea of the riches they contain, if they are hurried through at an ordinary travelling trot. There is one of these rooms, by the way, nay, two, I believe, which need not detain you long; for though they bear at their entrance an announcement that they

contain specimens of the French school of painting, they contain little or nothing to render them worthy of being exhibited as a specimen of the school to which the Poussins, Le Sueur, Vernet, and many other admirable artists belong. Of these I have not the slightest inclination *ragionare* excepting to say *Passa, ma NON guarda*.

There are some interesting *Rilievi* of *Cinquecento* Tuscan sculptors, in a small room described in the catalogue as the "Petit corridor de sculptures modernes." One of these especially, as being by the hand of Leonardo da Vinci's master (Andrea Verrochio), deserves attention. It is a scene representing the death of a beloved wife in childbirth, and is full of expression. There are several pieces in *basso rilievo* by Donatello, and others, and a pretty unfinished little Virgin and child by Michael Angelo.

In the room described as the "Cabinet des Bronzes modernes," are several very charming things, . . . but far beyond all the rest, in my estimation, is the famous little Mercury of John of Bologna. It is impossible to conceive anything more exquisite . . . I think I may say more *perfect*, than this enchanting little figure. It is of this they tell the well-known story of some one who, having seen it, upon its first being shown ran to summon a friend, exclaiming "Come! come this moment! . . . or it will fly away!" And never, I should think, did any morsel of metal so nearly delude

the imagination into fancying it instinct with life as this does. I have never seen anything in art, that I thought more wonderful than the spring upwards that is here represented. There are also in this room, several works of Benvenuto Cellini; and a curious piece executed by Ghiberti, and sent by him as a specimen of his work, when various artists were exhibiting in competition with each other, in order to obtain a commission for executing the bronze gates of the Baptistry. This work, the subject of which is the Sacrifice of Isaac, obtained for the young man, who was only twenty years of age, the very important commission at which his ambition aimed, and, as all the world knows, established his name and fame in this branch of art, almost beyond the reach of any competition. This remarkable triumph was moreover obtained over many competitors, among whom was the celebrated Brunelleschi. His design for the work, executed in the same style of *basso rilievo* as that of the successful candidate, is also preserved in this room, and they cannot be examined together without leaving a strong impression on the mind that the award which decided the question was a just one. This room of modern bronzes is full of precious things. Six heathen deities, by John of Bologna; . . . an extremely fine bust of the first Cosmo, by Benvenuto Cellini, and a waxen model of his famous Perseus, also another model in bronze of the same statue; . . . a very pretty statue of a winged boy, by Donatello,

together with many other objects almost equally deserving attention, make this little room a museum that ought to be long dwelt upon ; but I have never entered it, though I have been there several times, without remarking that among the many who enter, scarcely one pauses long enough to discover that there is anything in it worth looking at. The reason for this may probably be, that it forms a passage-room to the small collection of antique bronzes which are arranged in the next apartment. This observation, however, does not quite extend to all my countrymen. I have marked more than one of these fixed in very earnest contemplation of the little Mercury, but although this must ever be the best, it ought not to be the only thing cared for in this very precious *gabinetto*.

The antique bronzes to which you pass from this cabinet are also in a very small room, and excepting in the cases ranged round it, containing a variety of curious little specimens of ancient art, have but few objects to call the attention, but these few are, I believe, considered of high value. The most conspicuous of them is the figure of a man as large as life, apparently haranguing. This figure has both dignity and animation, and is considered as peculiarly precious, because declared by all antiquaries (a race who often seem to take great delight in contradicting one another), to be a real, true, genuine, undoubted, Etruscan work. Another Etruscan treasure is a figure that the learned call "Mercury," and without



doubting in the least that this is a proper name for him, one cannot so soon forget his younger brother in the next room balanced on the breath of zephyr, as not to allow that a modern artist may now and then, and in some particular qualities, such as making brass *mobile* and *volant*, for instance, excel an ancient one.

Then there is a Minerva, beyond all price, I believe, though, good lady, she has been nearly scorched to a cinder, notwithstanding the enduring stuff of which she is made; and lastly, there is a thing called "*Chimera*," that one may thank the gods is nothing more. This monster, too, is *véritable Etrusque*, and it greatly amused me to see two men walking round and round this hideous, and to us unmeaning, combination of heads and tails with a degree of reverence which might have led a very innocent novice to believe that it was the figure of some idol whom they considered it their duty to worship; . . . . but one of these adoring gentlemen had Valery's guide-book in his hand, and that discerning Gaul characterises the monster as "a model of the beautiful, simple, and severe;" so, as I suspect that one of them, at least, was a Frenchman, he felt perhaps that he could do no less. . . . Next to the dark statue of the Orator the thing I most admired was the head of a horse. The blood seems flowing within the swelling veins.

As to all the precious little things locked up in

“the presses,” as I once heard an erudite lady call them, I have little or no pleasure in looking at objects so very imperfectly displayed. It is very satisfactory to know that they are all there and taken such excellent care of, but I am fain to confess that the satisfaction goes not much farther. It is quite clear that these rare and precious objects should not be exposed to the careless examination of all comers, without sufficient precautions being taken in the way of special orders and of careful guardians; but as it is, the tourist will become better acquainted with these specimens of elaborate art from catalogues and engravings studied in his library at home, than by paying them a visit here.

A magnificent collection of pictures, divided into the different schools of Italy, occupy several of the fine rooms approached from the statue galleries . . . . and if I do not enumerate the many among them which delighted me, it is really because there are too many of such to come within any reasonable compass. Through many weeks those hours of the day during which the public are admitted, might be spent before them, and scarcely give time for the examination of all that are well worth examining; . . . . and yet the collection has altogether much less charm for me than that of the Pitti . . . . Yet there are some very exquisite pictures, too, in the room called the Cabinet of Baroccio, and still more perhaps in those of the Venetian school. The por-

traits by Titian there, particularly those of a certain Duke of Urbino and his wife, are equal to any in the world.

And then comes the HALL OF THE NIOBE; a noble room, round which is arranged the statues found nearly together at a spot near one of the gates of Rome, and which are supposed to have all belonged to the same group. If this be so, as there certainly appears great reason to believe, it is scarcely possible to doubt the correctness of Mr. Cockerell's ingenious suggestion, who supposes them to have been employed as the decoration of the tympan of a pediment of some Grecian temple. I have seen an engraving of the figures as thus arranged, and examined the engraving while standing in the midst of the statues. . . . Finish the group at the corners with a pair of the Rivers, which it was usual with the Greeks to employ for such purposes, and not the slightest difficulty or incongruity seems to remain.

As this majestic group was not known to the moderns till long after Dante had ceased to exist, the lines in "The Purgatorio" in which he alludes to Niobe are very singular. Had he seen the woe-begone expression of that noble face, as it is there sculptured, and also the *sette e sette* victims stationed around her, how surely would all the world have declared that he was thinking of this group, when he says,

“ O Niobe ! con che occhi dolenti  
Vedev' io te        \*        \*        \*  
Tra sette et sette tuoi figliuoli spenti ! ”

It is a thousand pities that this splendid room, which was built expressly for the reception of these statues, on their removal to Florence from the Medicean villa at Rome, should not be of a form to render Mr. Cockerell's arrangement possible ; for, if thus placed, every individual figure would acquire a fitness of attitude and expression that would wonderfully increase its effect. As they are now placed, the mind of the spectator has a much more difficult task than if it had only to suggest the position for which the artist originally designed each particular figure, for it has also to struggle with the effect now unhappily produced by the unmeaning juxtaposition of the rest . . . . a task which it is difficult to perform, and which in most cases must be achieved so imperfectly as to rob the majestic work of more than half its value. Fortunately, however, it is the noble mother's figure which suffers the least by this. Poor Niobe and the little daughter who so pitifully clings to her, form of themselves a group that requires no aid to make it produce all the effect which the artist could have desired. It is the other and, as I think, the much inferior statues which want the assistance which the arrangement they have lost would have given them.

But, mercy on me! . . . what a nation it must have been to have built after this fashion!

“ Oh! glorious *old* world that had such people in it!”

Statues that we are almost ready to fall before and salute with our foreheads on the earth, were perched up by them aloft, to make a frieze! I used to think that the Elgin marbles showed symptoms of enormous luxury in architecture, but what were their flat *rilievi* in point of splendour compared to the majestic crowd of Niobe and her family, standing forth bodily on the pediment of a temple? . . . And what may not the earth still hide? . . . the earth, and the water too? How do we know but that whole squadrons of Apollo's and Venuses may still be lying safely and softly bedded in mud at the bottom of the Tiber? Really, when one man digs up fifteen or sixteen ladies and gentlemen such as these, whom we are now compelled by the mere force of reason to believe were formed and created for no other purpose but to be placed as ornaments over a doorway, I see not why another, with the clear right and power to dig where he pleases, should despair of coming upon whole legions of gods and goddesses who might have held their more honoured stations within the door. . . . In short, my friend, for the first time in my life I cannot help feeling a little wish that I were the Pope of Rome!

There is a marble copy of the celebrated group of the Laocoon at the farthest extremity of the farthest corridor of the Medicean Gallery, by Bandinelli, which I have been told by several is extremely good, both as a work of art and as a faithful copy. I am sorry to hear it, because I do not like it at all. I am always sorry to hear that anything which displeases me is excellent, not only because it brings home to my mind a disagreeable conviction that my judgment is defective, but also because it makes me feel that this defect has occasioned me a positive loss. But I rarely find that these regrets mend the matter by leading me to change my mind. I fear my dislikings are often as little reasonable as that immortal one which has run into rhyme against Dr. Fell.

There is a *very* drunken Bacchus by Michael Angelo, not far from the Laocoon, which I like, perhaps, with as little reason as I dislike the other . . . . for I have read some severe strictures upon its anatomy . . . . nevertheless, I cannot help thinking that it is very admirable . . . . I fancy as I look at it that I see it reel.

And now I have whisked you to the end of the gallery without giving even a passing word to above one object in five hundred that it contains. Will you thank me for this? or will you reproach me? You ought to thank me, because the chances are so very much in favour of my teasing, instead of pleasing you, if I attempted to do otherwise. I

commend you to Vasari, Lanzi . . . . and many others who, I really think, (so very humble-minded am I become,) may be able to supply my deficiencies better than I could supply them myself. Adieu !

## LETTER XIII.

Routine of a Florence day in hot weather.—Malaria of the Cascina.—Italian mode of avoiding it.—Evident dampness.—Illness in consequence.—Dr. Harding.—Santa Croce.—Comparison with Poets' Corner.—The Cenotaph of Dante.—Tomb of Michael Angelo.—Tomb of Alfieri.—Italian Character.—Galileo.—Lines on the Santa Croce, by Mr. Everett.

Florence, May, 1841.

THE weather has again become intensely hot, and I intensely idle. As to journalizing, I could as easily attempt to work out an algebraic equation! The evening drives to the cascina, and the flowers you get there, and the lazy chit-chat, and the ice at Donay's afterwards, are all obtained and enjoyed with so trifling a demand upon our activity, that we still continue the system which seems throughout Florence to render them as necessary a part of the day's history, as getting out of bed in the morning. But nevertheless, the Italians, whenever we get speech of one, either directly or at second hand, cease not to declare that there is a vile malaria in the beautiful cascina precisely at the hour when all the English world resorts thither in order to inhale as much of the air as possible. It is true that the Italians themselves take this



drive also ; but it is at the very least an hour earlier ; and before the cause was explained to me, I was a good deal puzzled to understand why we constantly found a crowd of Italian carriages assembled in an open space immediately outside the *porta al prato*. But it is here, it seems, on somewhat higher, and what is considered much safer ground, that the gossipings in which the ignorant or thoughtless foreigners indulge in the cascina are performed by the more cautious natives. That the air of the cascina is extremely damp and therefore, probably, extremely noxious at the forbidden hour no one can doubt who will take the trouble of looking round him when driving there, just as the sun dips out of sight behind the horizon. For a few bright moments, indeed, it may be difficult to see anything save the mountains and oceans of sapphire and ruby nightly prepared in this country as the scenic decoration through which this principal actor in the Italian drama makes his exit ; but when this blaze has subsided a little, you have only to cast your eyes over the meadows among which you are abiding, in order to see rising from the earth a thick blue vapour that really looks as little like the atmosphere one would wish to feed one's lungs from as possible. And yet we English heroes often, nay, I might say, always, (allowing for a few exceptions in favour of those who know what the better part of valour is,) continue there for at least an hour afterwards ; not driving,

however, but sitting in open carriages, and forgetting, in the feast of reason and the flow of soul which circulate from carriage to carriage, as the young men fly about among them, making their wished-for perchings on the steps, both the blue vapour and the chilling breeze. Yet nobody, even among the English, appears at all prepared to deny the unhealthy influence of the hour; all they do is to defy it; and accordingly, we certainly do hear of more sore throats, low fevers, and troublesome coughs among us than ought to be heard of on the sunny side of the Alps in the month of May. Nor do I merely speak from hearsay on this subject, for I am myself but just recovered from a pretty sharp practical admonition on the folly of neglecting native warnings upon the subject of climate. After dining at the house of an acquaintance, where a large and pleasant party kept us rather beyond the usual hour of setting off for the cascina, we repaired thither as usual, and as usual remained there, chatting to all comers in front of the Grand Ducal farm, till I became more than usually sensible of the damp chilliness of the air around. We were engaged to pass the evening "en ville," but instead of arranging my toilet for this, I deemed it more advisable to disarrange it for going to bed, and there I remained for two or three days, which perhaps might have been weeks had not the skilful and prompt measures of Dr. Harding released me from it. He seemed instantaneously

to comprehend what was the matter with me. "You have had a *puntura*," he said, as he felt my pulse. And it was impossible to describe more accurately the sensation I experienced when the chill first caught me. It was exactly a *puntura*, and seemed to pierce my chest as palpably as if the malaria came armed with a lance of steel instead of vapour.

\* \* \* \* \*

The pleasantest morning lounges now are the churches; for there, comparatively speaking, the air is cool, and moreover it is possible, when you can stand no longer, to sit down, which is not the case at the Medicean Gallery, unless you give up seeing what you go to look at....or unless you stand ready for the chance of catching one of the four chairs of the Tribune. Nor are the churches, as you will readily believe, the least interesting part of this city. Some of the monuments here are very noble, and more are very interesting. It is only since I wrote my last letter that I have seen what is in this last particular the church of churches....the SANTA CROCE. This delay, however, I beg to assure you has not arisen from indifference, but exactly the reverse. I did *enter* the church some weeks ago, but the glance I was then able to take was so painfully hurried that I determined to make it the object of an early morning *tête-à-tête* walking expedition with my son; and in that manner we have seen it as it ought to have been seen. I

have heard Italians call it the Westminster Abbey of Tuscany.... But with all my home and heart-felt reverence for the dust that lies treasured in our Poets' corner, I must avow that it cannot be compared, as to impressive effect, with the majestic aisles of the Santa Croce. The chief reason for this is, doubtless, because it *is* a corner.... and the word which used to make itself a place in my heart, as indicating, though in homely phrase, something more holy, more sacred, and apart, than any other portion of the majestic shrine that rises above the Confessor, recurs to my mind here, as much too truly and accurately descriptive of its local peculiarities to be at all agreeable. As far as my merely English feelings are concerned I almost wish I had not seen the Santa Croce. It now seems to me as if those whose names blaze through the civilized world with a brightness that would attract all eyes that have speculation in them to our little England, if nothing else did.... it now seems to me as if the mortal relics of those who bore these names had been uncourteously thrust out from the nobler portion of the venerable fane, as though they were not sufficiently worldly-great to occupy it. I do not say it is so. But how this little undignified-looking nook first came to be selected as the mausoleum of England's greatest greatness, I know not; and so completely in all my visits to it has the glory of the buried dust overpowered all circumstance of its position, that

never, till I stood beneath the noble pile of the Santa Croce, and saw how predominating in aspect, as well as influence, were the tombs of those who have caused its name to be familiar as a household word throughout the world, . . . never till then, did I wish that WESTMINSTER ABBEY were the Campo Santo of our poets, and not a corner of it.

But if those whose business it has been to manage these matters at home might have managed them better, and if this venerated dust that we are talking about *has been* less reverently dealt with than it would have seemed to be, had it been permitted to approach more nearly to the dust of kings, the affront has been very amply avenged by the trumpet-mouthed voice of universal Fame abroad. When a courteous foreigner meets you, and by way of indulging you with a little conversation the most gratifying to English pride, begins to speak of Westminster Abbey . . . what has he in his thoughts? Is it the Gothic grace of Henry the Seventh's chapel? . . . Is it the Confessor's fine tomb? . . . Or any of the kindred regal dust that lies embedded near it? . . . Oh no! it is to none of these that he pays honour due. Westminster Abbey is to him only the shrine sacred to the shades of England's poets, and were any of us to attempt enlightening his mind by telling him it was only a very small and obscure corner of that magnificent building which had been set apart as the resting-place of some, and the memorials of more, of that great phalanx whose glory

he was pleased to rate so highly, he would look at us with most unfeigned astonishment, and perhaps ask if we had seen the Santa Croce !

And now that we have got back to the Santa Croce, let us continue there if you please a little while, that we may talk about it. In the first place, it is a very noble church, though it can hardly, I think, be called architecturally beautiful. What I best like is the effect of the fine coloured windows, which are placed so high as to throw their rich and mellow light all over the building without making it too light. It is in fact as solemnly dark as the most mournful imagination could desire. As to the very many objects of art which the great extent of this venerable edifice is likely to contain, I can only wish them in a position where I should be more apt to find myself more in a humour to look at them . . . but in entering the Santa Croce one looks for nothing, one wishes for nothing but tombs, tombs, tombs ! Nor did we look in vain. But I think those are wrong, and likely enough to cheat themselves out of a considerable portion of that sort of exalted feeling which it is so delightful to experience, who enter the Santa Croce intending to examine her monuments with the critical acumen of a connoisseur. In no sense is it the place for it. For even were the monumental works of the first order, all the mind bestowed on them must be stolen from the thoughts of those they commemorate ; . . . while, on the other hand, if they

become the subjects of depreciating discussion, how little will the clever critic be able to forget the things of the earth, that he may dwell for awhile in spirit with those who have passed away from it !

The monument to the memory of Dante is not the first that you come upon ; but though I passed by that of Michael Angelo to get to it, I could not help making it the first I looked at. An immensity of vituperative criticism has been launched against this impressive composition, and I doubt not that you, and I too, were we to try at it, could find abundance of "wise saws and modern instances" to prove that it ought not to be what it is, but something else. But there sits Dante, with robes and head-gear, ay and features too, such as we have been used to see whenever the graver or the palette has attempted to portray him. The figure, and indeed the whole structure of the monument is colossal. And one man says it is heavy, and another that it is bulky, and another that it is tame. And one gentleman I heard remark at a dinner-table discussion, that "Dante, as he is seated there, looks like an old witch." Change but the sex, and the criticism will stand extremely well. Dante as he is seated there looks like a wizard whom one might fancy with his uplifted finger performing an incantation that should enchant the world. . . . And so, for my part I find great fitness in the simile, and nothing in the attitude to displease me. There be others, too, who declare that there is something

ridiculous in making the Genius of poetry weep over an empty urn, after the lapse of five centuries. There is something so very prosaic in this observation, that the Genius of poetry seems but little affected by it. . . . And for the lapse of the five hundred years, instead of lowering the value of the group, it seems to enhance it in my estimation a thousand-fold. Other monuments have been raised to great men, and to little men, too, because they have died ; the reason that gave existence to this cenotaph, is different. It is here for that he whom it commemorates can never die. And for the interval, how deeply affecting is the history it discloses ! That the Tuscan Athens sinned, and sinned most grievously against her greatest son, is lamentably true. But it is not less so, that she has repeated it, and did not wait till the nineteenth century to confess that she did so. In the latter part of the fourteenth century a strong governmental effort was made to obtain his hallowed relics from Ravenna ; but, justly enough perhaps, it was made in vain. Thirty years afterwards, a similar attempt was repeated, and with no better success ; . . . and nearly a century later still, that famous application was made to Leo the Tenth, among the signatures to which, stands the name of Michael Angelo, who, moreover, implored permission to erect his tomb in the following words :—“ Io Michael Angelo, scultore, il medesimo a vostra santità supplico, offerendomi al divin poeta fare la sepultura sua conde-



cente e in loco onorevole in questa città." . . . I will not pretend to feel *no* regret that Michael Angelo failed in this attempt to become the artificer of the tomb of Dante. There would have been a fitness of the workman to the work, which would have rendered it one of surpassing interest; and it would have been particularly precious, too, because, as one may be pretty sure, he would not have left it unfinished. Nevertheless, there is nothing ridiculous, but on the contrary, a very noble, national perseverance, that speaks well for the sincerity of the national repentance, in the steadfast manner in which this object has been for ever kept in view, and (although, alas ! not over his sacred dust) it has been executed at last, very nobly at least, if not precisely after the style and manner of Praxiteles. The inscription, at any rate, cannot, I think, be found fault with. . . .

"ONORATE L'ALTISSIMO POETA."

On the pedestal we read

" Dante Aligherio  
Tusci  
Honorarium Tumulum  
A majoribus ter frustra decretum  
Anno MDCCC.XXIX  
Feliciter excitarunt."

On the other monuments erected here, in the fulness of time and fame, to the distinguished men whose dust had for awhile awaited this crowning testimony to their renown, we find inscriptions which

state that FLORENCE had supplied them ; . . . but on the tomb of Dante, it is all TUSCANY that lays claim to the honour.

Having devoted our first attention to the bard of "Heaven and hell," and of the mysterious depths between, we return to gaze at leisure upon the tomb of Michael Angelo.

The three figures, representing Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting, which with much propriety are called together here to mourn their common loss, were executed by three of his pupils. Architecture, which is considered as the best, is the work of Giovanni dell' Opera ; Sculpture is by Cioli ; and Painting by G. Batista del Cavaliere. These three figures are mournfully seated beside the tomb of their adopted son, and a bust of the mighty man so variously gifted rests against the sarcophagus. Michael Angelo died at Rome, at the age of ninety ; and it is said that the purpose of those in power there was, that he should find a sepulchre under the thrice holy roof of St. Peter's ; . . . which, considering the share he had in raising it, would assuredly have made him a fitting monument. But Duke Cosmo, it seems, thought that his Florence would be all the better for having the mortal relics of the great citizen restored to her. . . . And here, too, the claim was good, for Michael Angelo Buonarroti, beyond all question, was a Florentine. Neither might, nor right, however, appears to have settled the question, but the *astuzia*

inspired by very ardent zeal; for the body was removed by stealth to Florence, concealed amongst the goods of a travelling merchant.

The tomb of Alfieri bears the great name of Canova as the artist who composed and sculptured it; . . . but not even the *prestige* of this name, nor yet my own averseness to play the carping critic in such a spot, can prevent my averring that I do not like it. There is something paltry, unclassic, and undignified, in the oval form of it; and its pretty wreaths of flowers suit not the stern fibre of the great poet whose relics they bedeck. . . . Neither can I help wishing that, like that of its mighty neighbour, Dante, the monument of Alfieri had been erected by all Tuscany, instead of by the Countess of Albany. I do not like the inscription.

“ Victorio . Alfieri . Astensi  
Aloisia . e . Principibus . Stolbergis  
Albaniaë . Comitissa  
M.P.C . an. M.D.CCCX.”

I am told that this monument has not shared the popularity usually obtained by the works of Canova. The Italians, they say, do not like it, and considerable disappointment was expressed when it was first opened to the inspection of the public. I conceive, indeed, that it would have been no easy matter to have satisfied them on this occasion. In my heart I believe that there is less of *vain-glory* among Italians, and more of ardent love for what is really

great, than can be found in any nation of the earth. From the time that Napoleon first led his bandit troops over Italy, up to the present hour, the majority of her states have been in a false, forced, and unnatural position; which has crushed her physical strength, and in a considerable degree palsied her enormous intellectual vigour. *MA NON È SPENTA*. I have already seen, and heard enough to convince me that the country which has given birth to the greatest poet, the profoundest natural philosopher, the most accomplished statesman, and the most inspired artists in every species of labour that indicates the intellectual refinement of man, is still the same in type, in temperament, and fine development of mental power, as she has ever been. But we need no ghost to tell us that circumstances, which have nothing to do with Nature's liberal, nay, partial bounty to her, have veiled her brightness. But if ever a people nourished *unboastingly* in their heart of hearts, an innate consciousness of greatness, it is the Italians. A far different idea is abroad. It is not thus that France thinks of them; . . . but it may be, some shall live to learn that it is easier to gallop an army rough-shod over a whole continent, than to blot out any distinctive feature that it has pleased God to bestow on any portion of it. Alfieri is perhaps the last Italian who, in the higher walks of literature, has written with a perfectly unfettered pen. In him we find a strong spice of that racy, nervous vigour of mind,

so easily to be traced from Dante downwards, and which meets us equally in compositions grave or gay; in prose or rhyme. To him, therefore, the country seems to cling with the love of a mother for her youngest-born. Yet it is no blind love either; for there is too much deep thinking among them to permit his inconsistent theories, all of which he has made sufficiently brilliant to dazzle ordinary eyes, to pass for logical demonstrations. But his name is great, and ever must be so; and they would have been better pleased had the monument been more accordant with the man.

The figure intended to represent Italy is draped, and not very gracefully: which gave occasion for a distich expressive of more feelings than one.

“Canova questa volta l'ha sbagliata,  
Fe l' Italia vestita, ed è spogliata.”

The tomb of Machiavelli, erected more than two centuries and a half after his death, has an inscription, neat enough in the terse hyperbole of praise, but not calculated, I think, to produce very general sympathy.

“Tanto nomini nullum par elogium.  
Nicolaus Machiavelli  
Obiit an. A P. V. P. M. DXVII.”

The name of Galileo is second only in interest to that of Dante. . . . nay, perhaps it ought not to be second, even to him. His monument, the most interesting feature of which is a bust, presumed to

be a portrait, is placed against the wall of the church in the aisle opposite to that containing the tombs I have already mentioned ; but his venerated dust lies buried in the centre aisle, having, it is said, been removed thither from the unconsecrated ground in front of the church, where it was originally buried. The annals of science furnish no history equal in interest to that of this great man. There is a dash of romance mingled with its majestic truth that renders it exciting in the very highest degree.

As the memorial of Dante seemed to be naturally the first object that claimed attention on entering the Santa Croce, so Galileo is the climax of its interest ; and having reached this, we must turn to leave the most precious ground in all Italy (except a bit at Ravenna) ; for, to mention any other after him, would be bathos unbearable. I will not leave this holiest of holy roods, however, without letting you share with me an indulgence which I can tell you I value very highly, and for the privilege by which I grant it, you ought to be as grateful as I am. The name of Mr. Everett is too well known, and too justly appreciated, to make it matter of surprise that I should rejoice with no little joy at the power of communicating to you the following beautiful stanzas written by him after visiting the shrine that we have just quitted. Like their amiable and accomplished author, they are full of truth, power, and right feeling :—

## SANTA CROCE.

Not chiefly for thy storied towers, and halls,  
Nor the bright wonders of thy pictured walls ;  
Not for the olive's wealth, the vineyard's pride,  
That crown thy hills, and teem on Arno's side,  
Dost thou delight me, Florence ! I can meet  
Elsewhere with halls as rich, and vales as sweet ;  
I prize thy charms of nature and of art,  
But yield them not the homage of my heart.

Rather to Santa Croce I repair,  
To breathe her peaceful monumental air ;  
The age, the deeds, the honours to explore  
Of those who sleep beneath her marble floor—  
The stern old tribunes of the early time,  
The merchant lords of freedom's stormy prime,  
And each great name in every after age,  
The praised, the wise ; the artist, bard, and sage.

I feel their awful presence ; Lo ! thy bust,  
Thy urn, O Dante !—not alas ! thy dust.  
Florence that drove thee living from her gate  
Waits for that dust in vain, and long shall wait.  
Ravenna ! keep the glorious exile's trust,  
And teach remorseless factions to be just ;  
While the poor cenotaph which bears his name  
Proclaims at once his praise—his country's shame !

Next, in an urn not void, though cold as thine,  
Moulders a god-like spirit's mortal shrine.  
Oh, Michael ! Look not down so cold and hard,  
Speak to me, Painter, Builder, Sculptor, Bard.  
And shall those cunning fingers, stiff and cold,  
Crumble to meaner earth than they did mould ?

Art thou, who form and force to clay could'st give,  
And teach the quarried adamant to live,  
Bid, in the vaultings of thy mighty dome,  
Pontifical outlive Imperial Rome,  
Portray, unshrinking, to the dazzled eye,  
Creation, Judgment, Time, Eternity,  
Art thou so low? . . . And in this narrow cell  
Doth that Titanic genius stoop to dwell?

And thou, illustrious sage! thine eye is closed,  
To which their secret paths new stars exposed.  
Haply thy spirit in some higher sphere  
Soars with the motions which it measured here.  
Dost thou, whose keen perception pierced the cause  
Which gives the pendulum its mystic laws,  
Now trace each orb with telescopic eyes,  
And solve the eternal clock-work of the skies?  
While thy worn frame enjoys its long repose,  
And Santa Croce heals Arcetri's woes.

Nor thou alone. On her maternal breast,  
Here Machiavelli's tortured limbs have rest.  
Oh! that the cloud upon his tortured fame  
Might pass away, and leave an honest name!  
The power of Princes o'er thy limbs is staid,  
But thine own "Prince"—that dark spot ne'er shall fade.  
Peace to thy ashes! Who could have the heart  
Above thy grave to play the censor's part?  
I read the statesman's fortune in thy doom,  
Toil, greatness, woe; a late, and lying tomb!

Here by thy side, the indomitable will,  
And fiery pulse of Asti's bard, are still!  
And she—the Stuart's widow—rears the stone,  
Seeks the next aisle, and drops beneath her own.  
The great, the proud, the fair!—alike they fall;  
Thy sickle, Santa Croce, reapeth all!



Yes, reapeth all . . . or else had spared the bloom  
 Of that fair bud, now closed in yonder tomb,  
 Meek, gentle, pure; and yet to him allied  
 Who smote the astonished nations in his pride,  
 "Worthy his name,"\* . . . so saith the sculptured line,  
 Master of men! . . . Would he were worthy thine!

Hosts yet unnamed, the obscure, the known, I leave;  
 What throngs would rise, could each his marble heave!  
 But we, who muse above the famous dead,  
 Shall soon be silent as the dust we tread.  
 Yet not for me, when I shall fall asleep,  
 Shall Santa Croce's lamps their vigils keep!  
 Far o'er the sea, in Auburn's quiet shade,  
 With those I loved, and love, my couch be made,  
 Spring's pendent branches o'er the hillock wave,  
 And morning's dew-drops sparkle on my grave;  
 While Heaven's great arch shall rise above my bed,  
 When Santa Croce crumbles o'er its dead;  
 Unknown to erring, or to suffering fame,  
 So I may leave a pure, though humble name.

EDWARD EVERETT.†

\* Ici repose Charlotte Buonaparte digne de son nom, 1839.  
 The translation "worthy *his* name" expresses the idea of the inscription, and is adopted for an obvious reason.—E. E.

† This elegant scholar, and truly amiable man, is now Minister from the United States to the Court of St. James's.—F. T.

## LETTER XIV.

Expedition to Vallombrosa and Camaldoli.—Modes of Conveyance.—Difficulties of the Road.—Position of Vallombrosa.—Descriptive Lines from Milton.—Fitness of the Place for its purpose.—Rough Streets.—Diversity of Opinion as to proceeding.—Division of the Party.—Departure of three for Camaldoli.—Magnificent Scenery.—Difficult Roads.—Bad Breakfast.—Thunder Storm.—Reception by the Monks.—Pleasant Accommodation.—Easy Return.

Florence, May, 1841.

SINCE I last wrote to you, we have been upon a somewhat fatiguing but very agreeable excursion to the Convents of Vallombrosa, and Camaldoli. Our party, consisting of five ladies and two gentlemen, left Florence at a tolerably early hour in the morning, but not so near “the hour of prime,” as if my very matinal son and myself had constituted the whole party. But as we have never yet, in all our wanderings, encountered any one who fully comprehended all the advantages we find, or fancy, in our lark-like hours, we have ceased to grumble when we are obliged to give them up. We, therefore, contented ourselves on the present occasion, with routing out our friends considerably earlier than their usual habits made natural to them, and con-

trived to reach Pelago by mid-day. To this place the road is so good that the carriages we used in Florence conveyed us thither without difficulty; but beyond it, towards Vallombrosa, no carriage could be employed except a species of basket fixed upon sliders, like a sledge used in snow, and these baskets were able to contain two persons. This curious and (by the description of those who tried it) most uncomfortable vehicle was drawn by oxen; and what with their usually slow and solemn step, and the precipitous nature of the road, which made their usual slowness slower still, the mounting to Vallombrosa was likely to be a long business. Two of our ladies, however, braved all this tediousness, and set off in a basket; the rest of us following on horses, trained to the business of carrying people up and down passes very much worse than any ordinary stairs could have been. We had also a sumpter horse for our provisions, having been cautioned not to trust too implicitly to the hospitality of the worthy monks. The road proved, to say the very best of it, quite as bad, and quite as dangerous, as we expected; but there was enough of wild beauty about it to prevent our complaining. I certainly felt, now and then, that I had set my life upon the hazard of a horse's hoof being as accurate and as steady as a railroad wheel, for in very many places any swerving must have plunged the rider some hundred fathom deep. But use lessens marvel, and lessens terror at the same time; so, after a few miles

of this touch-and-*not-go* work, we became sufficiently accustomed to it to think that the worst danger we had to endure was from the sun. Of shade there was very little. The mountain solitudes through which we were making our way being, for the most part, entirely barren; . . . . and while thus exposed, the scorching influence of the sun of Italy was really awful. At intervals, however, a shady oasis intervened, and then we breathed again, and renewed the stock of strength and endurance necessary to achieve the adventure we had undertaken, and to reach the natural stronghold which, I am persuaded, the monks of yore must have sought and fixed upon, in the pious belief that no female footstep could ever follow them into it. Nor, in truth could it. Nothing but the well-taught race of little horses which are kept at Pelago, and attended by guides as patient and as sure-footed as themselves, could possibly enable women to besiege this sacred retreat in the daring manner they do now.

At intervals, when the path was wide enough to permit our turning round our horses to look about us, we caught, as we advanced higher and higher, magnificent views over the upper valley of the Arno, with various distances of far-off Apennines in some directions, that seemed of almost Alpine boldness, so nobly did they rear their tops towards the heavens. At length we enjoyed the inexpressible gratification of finding ourselves sheltered from the sun by continuous plantations of

pine, chestnut, and a rich undergrowth, I think, of beech . . . . and then it was that we really and truly began to enjoy the expedition. Any one having courage enough to meet the sun at four o'clock in the morning, might convert the whole of this excursion into something exceedingly delightful; for certainly the only serious drawback to our enjoyment was the almost frightful heat of the unmitigated sunshine during exactly all the hottest hours of the day.

The picture presented by the Convent when first it opens upon you is very beautiful, and the effect of its fine stream, its rich woods, and its green pastures, after the rough, rude, burning path by which we had reached it, has something in it like magical enchantment. Mr. Forsyth has quoted a passage from Milton which he says *must*, from its wonderful exactitude of description, have been written as a record of Vallombrosa. Not even Walter Scott himself, who to my feeling had the most singular faculty that man ever possessed of painting scenery in words, could in truth have done it better . . . . and as I would fain bring the scene before your eyes, I see no good reason why I should not quote it too:—

“ ——— Which crowns with her enclosure green,  
As with a rural mound, the champaign head  
Of a steep wilderness, whose hairy sides  
With thicket overgrown, grotesque and wild,

Access denied ; and over-head upgrew  
 Insuperable height of loftiest shade,  
 A sylvan scene, and as the ranks ascend,  
 Shade above shade, a woody theatre  
 Of stateliest view."

There is Vallombrosa for you ! . . . . exactly as she appeared to us as we turned our horses' heads out of the thick covert that we had rejoiced in for the last half mile. Only in addition to this, which is only the back-ground and framework, you must imagine the hoary monastery itself nestled into this dark leafy shelter, with the additional beauty of a bright busy stream, running at no great distance below it.

To the gate of the Convent, the ladies, of course, ventured not to approach ; but while the gentlemen presented themselves there to request the hospitality so freely accorded to all comers, we left our horses at a stable where one or two men seemed standing ready to receive them, and followed our guide to a detached building called the *Forestiera : tant*, we must presume, *soit peu* distant from the holy dwelling of the abbot, and his brethren, to permit our being received within its walls without impropriety.

Ariosto says,

" Vallombrosa  
 Ricca e bella, non men' religiosa,  
 E cortesa a chiunque vi venia."

And sufficiently *cortesa*, we certainly found her; exactly the same reception awaiting us as we should have met with at an inn. The bed-rooms were all submitted to our examination and choice, and our orders requested as to the hour we wished to dine. There was nothing very sublime or romantic in this; but as our guides gave us to understand that we were expected to "leave a donation" in proportion to our number and our demands, it made the business of accommodation much easier to perform than if we had found ourselves considered as guests. Having got rid of as much of our dust and fatigue as the Acqua Bella (for so the Vallombrosa stream is called) could remove, we rejoined the gentlemen, and sallied forth, while our dinner was preparing, to look about us.

It is a singular and a beautiful spot, and one might pass many days roaming up the hills, and down the hills, with no danger of having either sameness, or tameness, to complain of in our rambles . . . . As by far the most important portion of the repast we were expecting had travelled with us, ready dressed, from Florence, we had been assured by the servant who had accompanied us, that it would be very quickly ready, and therefore, our wider excursions being reserved for the evening, we permitted ourselves only to ramble under the fir-trees for half an hour or so, when we returned, and found, as we had fervently hoped to do, the table spread and ready to receive us. The blessing of the whole







tired and hungry party ought to rest upon the man who told us to beware of trusting for a dinner to the monks of Vallombrosa! . . . Had we done so, as far as a day's famine could have achieved it, we must have perished. The memory of the garlic soup, of which some of us were rash enough to taste, will probably remain with its own dreadful chymic power of remaining, longer than that of the Acqua Bella itself. Had we, however, been rightly, instead of worldly-minded, this melancholy diet would rather have suggested to us admiring meditations on the habitual abstinence of the holy brotherhood, of which this soup was unquestionably a type, than any thoughts concerning its influence on ourselves. . . . But truth obliges me to confess that instead of *so improving* the circumstance, we welcomed, with a chorus of applause, a proposal for an immediate glass of champagne. This, and the other little consolations which we owed to our sumpter horse, enabled us, despite the penitential *potage* of the convent, so far to restore our spirits and our strength as to make us start forth cheerily upon a long exploring expedition.

On getting free of the thick fir-plantations which immediately border upon the Convent, you become aware of the very remarkable situation of the spot to which your toilsome climbing has brought you. If any voice can, more distinctly than another, speak to you of a valley, it is surely that of a clear running stream, with its gentle ripple, and its finny

trout, the drooping willows upon its banks, and the pasture-meadows of its neighbourhood. Yet here we were in the midst of all this, and almost on the summit of a high mountain into the bargain. I wonder not that a society of monks should fix themselves here, for truly the place has the air of a convent ready made by nature. Here is all the remoteness, the difficulty of access, and the consequent profound seclusion which such gentry require ; and also there is all that cosy little preparation for comfort which, so very rationally in my estimation, appears likewise to be sometimes considered as a monastic requirement. But I do wonder what a party neither monks nor nuns would have proposed doing with such a spot, had they suddenly found it. To choose a dwelling-place, the access to which was in baskets drawn by oxen, would argue but little wisdom ; and yet to turn from such a nook as this, and leave it for wolves and foxes to dwell in, would argue less. It really does seem as if such paradoxical retreats must have been expressly made for monks, or monks made expressly for such retreats. Could you be transported, upon that dear bit of fairy tapestry we read of, into the middle of this Vallombrosa without passing through the basket-and-oxen process, or even having to cling to a horse with two of its feet, poor little beast, a good yard nearer the moon than the other two . . . . could you be thus conveyed into the midst of its chestnut groves, and look thence upon its

pretty dairy, and its lovely stream, you might understand why Milton talks of angels lying

“entranced

Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks  
In Vallombrosa, where th’ Etrurian shades  
High over-arch’d imbower—”

But you would by no means understand how it could be, that such a pretty paradise could be found among such “desert wildernesses.” . . . And I promise you it is a vagary of nature worth climbing a little to see.

Our walk, dictated to us as to its direction by one who knew well what he was about, led us along the side of a hill, from whence we looked down upon a very considerable portion of the earth, and the glory of it. Northward, we counted eight distinct distances, the farthest of which the guide who accompanied us said was the mass of hills behind Genoa . . . and the sharply-pointed summit of Radi-cofani was visible to the south-west. No mere bird’s-eye view could be finer than that which gave us this upper vale of Arno, stretched out like a map before us. I think I know now how a fine prospect looks to ladies and gentlemen when travelling in a balloon.

Our walk brought us to the ruins of what we were told had been a chapel . . . sacred for some reason or other, I forget what . . . but nothing could well be less picturesque, or legendary-looking than the style of its architecture; for it consisted

only of four square walls, with windows equally square, that looked down upon the enormous vale below. However, these square windows had sills which served us, *faute de mieux*, for sofas, and here we rested ourselves, and looked, and looked, and looked, till it was time to turn about and walk back again. The bed-rooms of the Forestaná, the great defect of which was that they had not the least the air of cells, were clean enough, and the day's fatigue had brought enough of poppy influence with it, to have made sleep a very ready blessing, had not the spiritual care of our hosts for us, deemed it right and fitting that we should lie . . . if not in sack-cloth . . . in something that was harsher still. I am quite persuaded that the manufacture of their sheets is something conventually conventional, and peculiar, and closely allied to that system of mortification and penance which the Romish Church considers so wholesome. A bed of thorns would have been quite as agreeable as the bed of sand (for such it seemed to be) which they had prepared for me.

Before the party separated for the night, an important question, which had been partly canvassed before we set off, but which had not arrived at a conclusion, was again brought forward for decision. Were we, or were we not to proceed to Camaldoli? . . . Our Pelago horses and guides were hired with the understanding that they were either to take us on to this still more celebrated, yet still more re-

mote seat of learning, or bring us back from Val-lombrosa, as might be decided after we had made the experiment of one day's equestrian clambering among the Apennines; . . . and before we retired to rest they were to receive their orders; the prolonged expedition requiring that we should start earlier, than if we decided upon returning. It soon became evident that the inclinations of the party were not exactly unanimous; some declaring that not all the convents in the world should induce them to peril their existence farther by proceeding over such pathless deserts; and others, that not all the deserts in the world should prevent their getting to Camaldoli.

Luckily, this was one of the questions upon which uniformity of opinion was not necessary; indeed, uniformity of opinion, if it had been in favour of proceeding, would have been exceedingly unfortunate, inasmuch as we had not horses enough for the purpose, and the basket-work was no farther possible. However, it proved that we had horses enough for those who wished to prolong their excursion; for after very mature deliberation it became evident that this adventurous portion of the squadron amounted to no more than three . . . my son, myself, and my young friend, Fanny S——. Upon consulting my young ally, I soon found that her habits and inclination accorded perfectly with my own upon the important matter of early rising. She had the same horror as myself of lying in bed

during that first delicious portion of the day when the birds and the flowers are singing their morning hymns, and of being broiled, during the succeeding portion, when the sun is singing *his* hymn from the meridian. So we quietly exchanged a few whispers about "four o'clock to-morrow morning," and parted for the night, my son undertaking to make the necessary arrangements with the men, two of whom we found it would be necessary to take with us: it being declared advisable that for some portion of the road each lady should be provided with a squire for her bridle rein.

Our punctuality the next morning might have corrected the sun, had that autocrat of all Italy required it. . . . At four o'clock we were afoot, vicarially, *bien entendu*, by the aid of our little horses; and each one munching a crust of bread, (for the place named for our breakfast-halt was at considerable distance,) we set forth in high glee, penetrating the covert of a beautiful forest of chestnut and birch, through which a steep upward path immediately turned from the Valle Ombrosa. Having pursued this a little way, we reached a precipitous bank, or rather cliff, at which the trees deserted us, but which gave us instead of them a vastly finer view than any we had seen the day before; for in addition to immense extent, we had here a broken variegated foreground of wonderful beauty, giving me for the first time, to say the truth, a satisfactory idea of the Vallombrosian scenery, which

so many poets have sung. From this spot we distinctly saw Florence ; and could even distinguish the Duomo and Campanile ; while immediately around us, the very brightest growth of chestnut that it is possible to imagine, hanging over the cliffs above, falling almost perpendicularly beneath our feet below, and now and then closing round us for a moment, as if to make the next majestic opening the more impressive, gave a richness of colouring to the scene, which contrasted charmingly with the grey arid outline of the mountain at no great distance before us, and over which my guide told me, with rather an ominous shake of the head, our road lay.

All this beauty of scenery, however, did not last long ; for we soon left every trace of vegetation behind us, and had, I think, for a few miles, nothing to admire but our own courage, which enabled us to continue our course among rocks and precipices more agreeable as a distant view, in my opinion, than when so very near as to furnish the only ground on which your horse can tread. Arrangements had been made that one of the two carriages which had conveyed the party from Florence should meet us at a little village called La Consuma, from whence it was to take us to Prato Vecchio, where the horses were again to meet us for the purpose of carrying us over eight miles of rock, across which no other mode of conveyance has ever yet been attempted !



I cannot say much in praise of the breakfast at Prato Vecchio. . . . our morsel of dry Florence bread was worth it all. . . . However, the very rudeness and strangeness of the place was not without charm, particularly, as on the apex of a little hill commanding the town stood the ruins of a castle called La Romena, which formerly belonged to a race of counts bearing the same name, rendered immortal by Dante's having mentioned as well-known cut-throats a Guido and Alessandro of the family. This was, of course, enough to make us gaze upon its dark and, doubtless, blood-stained walls with all the affection of romance. And this was the last object we had to gaze upon after leaving Prato Vecchio, except the desolate rocks over and among which our route lay. I never beheld a region so utterly devoid of vegetation. The very air seemed of a dun dismal grey by reflection; and even the heavens, as if from sympathy, looked grey and dun, too, and evidently threatened a storm. To this, however, I had no sort of objection. I was already so heartily frightened by the unspeakable ups and downs by which my horse had been led, that I really had no objection whatever to a little more terror; and when at last a loud clap of thunder came, reverberated by a score of towering Apennines, I felt that I would not have missed it for a good deal. Frightened as I was, I well remember, too, our line of march, and the extremely picturesque effect of the whole scene. The hill side

along which we were clinging was, as I have told you, grey, and utterly barren . . . barren were the depths below, . . . barren were the heights above ; dark almost to blackness was the sky, and dun and dismal was the air. My son led the cavalcade ; then followed the light and graceful little figure of my young friend, courageously disdaining the hand upon the rein, from which I found such singular comfort, and making her way onward with such an air of tranquil and composed enjoyment of the whole scene, that it almost gave me courage to look at her ; . . . and then the dark-hued Salvator-like figures of the two guides, the one leading my horse, and the other, though disengaged, assiduously watching the steps of the one that was his especial charge,—altogether made a picture that it will take a good while to forget.

At this point of our expedition we fully expected a storm of hail, or rain, that would have put our summer travelling suits in sad condition ; but our fears were groundless, for, after giving us another “lengthened aggravated roar,” the black mass above our heads seemed very mysteriously to vanish, leaving a sort of pale light behind it that suited well with the dry and sickly landscape. For as much, perhaps, as another mile after this picturesque little thunder-storm, our route continued without any greater variety than a little more, or a little less of danger, from slippery descents and break neck

acclivities, when suddenly we saw before us, as if by magic, a scene of the most enchanting softness and the very richest verdure. This is the same sort of thing, certainly, as I have already described at Vallombrosa, but the contrast is infinitely more sudden, as well as more violent, here; for the last part of the approach to Vallombrosa, and before the valley becomes visible, is through thick copse, which, though it produces an excellent effect, as a covert from which to emerge upon a beautiful view, cannot be compared with the arid world of schistous stones, from whence you come down upon Camaldoli, either for the suddenness of the change, or the almost miraculous contrast it exhibits. No sooner had our horses made their last steep, downward step from the mountain's side, than we found ourselves in a good road leading to the large and handsome buildings of the convent. The pretty dairy farm, with its rich pastures, the musical bright stream, the majestic chestnut trees, and the finely-wooded curve of the fertile valley that stretches away between lofty, but forest-covered, Apennines, forms a picture that made me wink my eyes and look again, before I could feel quite sure that it was real.

One has heard of "sounds that might create a soul under the ribs of death;" and if there are sights that can do the same, I should be inclined to think Camaldoli was one of them....

for I had felt so tired, exhausted, and really unwell five minutes before, that I could not have believed it possible I could have greatly heeded any more scenery for the present.... But now, for a while, I forgot all my ailments, and fancied that I should like to roam for hours through that lovely valley, without giving a thought to such vulgar matters as rest and refreshment. I will not, however, pretend to say, that this fine frenzy was very enduring. I was exceedingly tired, and soon felt a longing desire to lie down for an hour, before entering upon any further exertion. But though our guides seemed at no loss where to address themselves in order to find stabling for the horses.... which was found in a row of rustic-looking offices skirting the road, at some distance from the gates of the convent, the obtaining shelter for ourselves appeared less easy. One of these rustic buildings had the air of an uninhabited house, and upon inquiry we found that it was indeed such, being in fact the *Forestieria* erected for the hospitable purpose of giving hospitality to women.... if any such could be found of sufficient courage to penetrate to this mountain fastness. But it was not on record, as a magnificent-looking monk, with a long beard, told us.... it was not on record that any woman had been ever there; and consequently all the preparations made for their accommodation had been removed, and nothing re-

mained in the house but a rude table and a few chairs. These were cold tidings....but they were uttered with so much kindness, and such cordial assurances that everything in their power should be done to make us comfortable, that it was impossible not to *feel* comforted at least, if not rested. I begged permission, notwithstanding the unpromising description of the Foresteria, to enter it, feeling certain that with my shawl rolled up for a pillow, I could take the rest I wanted, in defiance of its want of furniture. After some delay from apparent uncertainty where to look for it, the key was found, and we were admitted to the interior of a little building containing two rooms, which, had they not been in the state too accurately described by the good monk, would have satisfied all our wishes, for being up-stairs they commanded a view over the lovely little valley, its stream, its chestnut groves, and the pine-covered mountains that hid it from the world. Even as it was I was thankful to get beneath its shelter; for the thunder-clouds having disappeared, the sun was again in full power, and beautiful as was the scene it shone upon, I felt no longer any inclination to explore it at that moment. Not so my companions, however....and their inclination to ramble dovetailed in with mine to sleep, admirably, and I dismissed them, after receiving such contributions of riding wraps as made me rich in pillows. The

room, though so long untenanted, was perfectly dry, and opening the windows that the sweet air might come to me, I indulged that "*Fain would lie down*" feeling, which was so strong upon me, and in two minutes was fast asleep. How long I had enjoyed the "good dulness" I know not, but a voice that seemed very close, though very far from loud, awoke me, and starting up I saw three most stately-looking monks . . . the shortest, as I believe, at least six feet high, with beards as abounding as that of Aaron, and their flowing garments so adding to their size, that as I looked up to them from my (not flowery but) floory couch, I thought they looked like so many gigantic magicians, come to punish me for intruding unbidden into their mysterious haunts. For half a moment I really was most strangely startled, for I had been very soundly asleep, and I could not immediately rouse myself sufficiently to comprehend who they were, or what they were come for.

The kind souls did not, however, leave me long in ignorance; as I sat up and looked around me I perceived that the three figures I had first seen standing round me were not all my visitors; . . . there were three others, habited, I believe, in the same manner, but with demeanour less dignified, one of whom was bending under the weight of a large mattress, another bearing a fine plump square pillow in each hand, and the third with his head

and shoulders buried under blankets and coverlets. I suppose I looked a little astonished, for one of those I had first espied smiled as he told me not to be alarmed at seeing so many strangers. He said that having come to see if I wanted anything they could get for me, they had found me sleeping on the ground, and, fearing that must be "*troppo spiacevole per una donna*," they had ordered the servants of the convent to prepare me a bed as well as the place would permit. I thanked them very gratefully, and having risen from the floor, assured them that I could arrange what they had so kindly brought without giving them any further trouble. But this they would not permit, and a very comfortable bed was speedily arranged for me, upon which, apparently to their great satisfaction, I lay down before they left the room. It is impossible to do justice to the benevolent kindness of their manner, or to the gentle zeal with which they all assisted in preparing this place of rest for me. Nothing, certainly, could be more unlike the *hostelry* style of our reception at Vallombrosa, than the manner in which we were treated here. This is, of course, naturally enough accounted for, by the fact, that scarcely a summer-day passes at Vallombrosa without its receiving guests; whereas, at Camaldoli the male strangers who arrive are very few, and the female (till we made the exception) none at all. But whatever the cause, the effect was

exceedingly agreeable, for our arrival seemed to give pleasure, and drew forth that sort of cordial welcome which it is always so delightful to receive.

My companions returned, delighted with their ramble, and soon after, a neatly-served, but not very good dinner was placed on the table, during which the lay-servants of the convent waited upon us, while one of the reverend brethren remained standing in presence, as if to do us honour, civilly answering whatever questions we asked, and appearing, indeed, very kindly anxious to do the honours of their establishment as hospitably as possible. From this good brother we learned that the miserable route by which our guides had brought us from Vallombrosa was not the only one, nor by any means the best, by which the convent could be approached or left. This was most joyful news to me, as my squire had more than once told me, with very grave looks, as we came along, that the return, particularly one part of it, where there had been a difficult ascent in coming, would be very dangerous in going back. For what reason I cannot imagine; but those guides certainly did not seem pleased when we afterwards told them of our intention of returning by a different route to Prato Vecchio, where the carriage was to meet us. The only way I can account for this is, by supposing that they would lose part of their business of horse letting



and leading, if it were found that Pelago, though certainly the best route to Vallombrosa, was perfectly out of the way in coming to Camaldoli.

After we had dined, the best part of the repast having been furnished to me from the *spezieria*, whence the kind brothers had taken *half* their stock of tea, (which they had procured and used only as a drug,) we set off upon an expedition up the side of a mountain, in the opposite direction to that by which we had arrived . . . . and as opposite in appearance as position, for whereas *that* was bare, *this* was thickly covered with trees; so thickly, indeed, that after we had mounted to a very considerable height, it was only at intervals that we could snatch the merited reward, by enjoying the expansive view it commanded. We did not attempt to climb higher still, to the point whence Ariosto declares both the Mediterranean and Adriatic seas, to be visible, and that for two reasons: . . . First, because we were too tired to like the idea of so long a walk, and, secondly, because this assertion of the great *Romancer* is characterized by the name of "*la bugia d'Ariosto*," which might have made the labour, if we had undertaken it, a vain one. In justice to the immortal Ludovico, however, I ought to state that both our guides declared that they *had* seen these two seas from the spot indicated; but then, on the other hand, did any one ever find a guide in any country who had *not*





seen everything? . . . . They might fear else to be stigmatised as *blind* guides, I suppose, and so lose their profession and calling.

Our lodging for the night was not prepared, like that of my *siesta* during the day, at the ill-provided Forestieria, but at the pretty *cascina*, which, at the distance of half a mile from the convent, contained a room with two beds in it, which was not considered as too holy to be occupied by my young friend and myself. My son was very courteously invited into the convent where, as he told us afterwards, he was superlatively well lodged. Our beds, though homely, were perfectly comfortable, and the old man who performed the office of *cameriera*, or rather *cameriere*, was infinitely civil and attentive. This *cascina* lodging, too, furnished us with an excellent meal, for we supped on milk and brown bread greatly to our satisfaction.

Here was a place that we all agreed might make a delightful *séjour* for a week or so, if the holy abbot would grant permission (which may, perhaps, fairly be doubted); but we felt no such longings at Vallombrosa . . . . not that I at all doubt the beauty of the region, which may very likely, at some points, be equal to what we have found here; but the *guinguette* air of the dwelling in which we were received, and the entire absence of everything like monastic holiness in all we were permitted to see, destroyed in a very

great degree the influence of its oft-sung and most mellifluous name. Whereas, we found Camaldoli the very perfection of a religious solitude . . . . with a long-bearded brotherhood, all *faits à peindre*, to receive us, an isolated dairy-house to sleep in, the hoards of the *spezieria* opened to give us some tea, and our male companion taken away from us and locked up in the convent during the night.

We set out on the following morning on our return to Florence at an early hour . . . . but not, however, before we had enjoyed the luxury of a dairy breakfast; and if our homeward course was marked by no adventure, neither was it rendered toilsome by any fatigue. . . . And I do strongly advise you to remember, if you ever find yourself at Florence, with the inclination to visit Vallombrosa and Camaldoli, that you make not one excursion of it, but two. Persons going to the latter place, have no business (unless they wish to pay a visit to the fraternity) at the former, but, on the contrary, have every possible travelling reason to avoid it; for not only does it throw them into a most vile road, instead of a very good one, but greatly increases the distance into the bargain. After leaving Camaldoli, we rode for about three miles along a very tolerable road to a farm belonging to the monks. The name of this *podere*, I forget, but there would be no difficulty in finding it, if, on arriving at Prato Vecchio,

you signify your wish of proceeding to Camaldoli. At this farm, let its name be what it may, we obtained a comical little carriage with one horse, called a barocchino, and in this were conveyed to Prato Vecchio, where we found our carriage waiting. But the road along which this barocchino took us, was perfectly good enough to have permitted the use of our Florence carriage as far as the farm, and from thence to the convent the distance is an easy walk, in case saddle-horses could not be found there.... I am not *quite* sure that the barocchino could make its way actually to the convent; but neither am I sure that it could not. This, however, is a question that could easily be answered at the farm.

On the whole our expedition was a very pleasant one, and I only regretted on returning from it that arrangements had not been made, and time allowed, for continuing it as far as Lavernia.... a much more wild and savage solitude than either of the others.... and one to which I have since learned we might have penetrated without exposing ourselves to anything like as much danger and fatigue as we encountered between Vallombrosa and Camaldoli.... So much for *general information*.

## LETTER XV.

Popular Fête at the Cascina;—the Duke and his Family in the midst of it.—Appearance of the People.—Service by Torchlight in the Duomo.—Startling Movement of a Dead Man's Head.—Processions.—Brethren of the Misericordia.—Origin of the Confraternity.—The Bridges of Florence.—Private Communication between the Palaces.—Fountain with the Hercules of John of Bologna.—Borgello.—Age of Dante.—Drawing of the Lottery.—Dreadful effects of Lotteries upon the People.

Florence, May, 1841.

I HAVE been much pleased by witnessing a thoroughly popular Tuscan fête. It took place on Holy Thursday at the Cascina, and though infinitely less noisy, and what would generally be called less gay, than the same sort of thing in France, there was an air of universal contentment and happiness among the immense crowds of people assembled, which it was very delightful to witness. In addition to all the artizans and petty tradespeople of the town, there were throngs of peasants from all parts of the surrounding country, amounting we were told to above twenty thousand! The crowd in the drives, walks, and meadows of the Cascina, was, considering its great extent, perfectly astonishing; but not a sound was heard that

could be called disorderly or even boisterous, though an air of perfectly unchecked merriment was universal. I visited the ground twice in the course of the day, and on both occasions found it as full as I think it could be, consistently with the power of moving. The Grand Duke and his family walked for an hour among the crowd in the evening. Thousands, I was told, were already assembled, and eating their breakfasts there, at sunrise; and a moderate style of domestic feasting—mothers, fathers, and children, sitting in little circles together—appeared to be going on in one part or another of the ground, during the whole day. I thought that, in this fine and fair specimen of national physiognomy, the men had the advantage. I never saw a more healthy-looking, handsome, well-grown race. Their dress, too, struck me as being peculiarly respectable, as to its material, condition, and form; considerably less picturesque indeed than that of the Germans upon similar occasions, but giving an idea of being considerably more modern, though less fanciful, as well as less costly. Among the women, there were some *exquisitely* lovely, and certainly more perfectly beautiful, both as to form and features, than I remember anywhere in the same rank. For it is rarely, I think, that the form of a hard-working woman, in any country, reaches its full perfection of growth, without losing some portion of its grace, particularly about the shoulders. But



this was not the case among the beauties I am now speaking of, who had several of them an air of *historique* picturesque perfection that really approached very nearly to the *beau idéal* of beauty as it may be seen in the Madonnas of Raphael. More than one of these delicate-looking young creatures did I see, in peasant's garb, who looked vastly as if they had walked out of a picture-frame; having a look so indescribably resembling an Italian work of art, that I fancied I must have known their nation had I met them in a land the farthest removed from it. But of these fair perfections there were very few. Perhaps I may have seen four or five deserving all I have said, in the course of my two drives and my one walk . . . . certainly not more; and of the rest I should say that, excepting the bright black eyes, and a good form of head, they were not superior in average beauty to our own peasantry. Those of quite the lower orders had their heads uncovered; and of the rest, the great majority wore the round flat hat of Tuscan straw, which is not unfrequently seen upon *petites élégantes* in the Tuileries gardens, as a guard against the sun.

After our last drive to look at these happy thousands, we went as usual to Donay's, and found so many who were doing the same thing, that the getting within reach of an *ambulante* tray from the door was positively an affair of considerable skill, and risk too. We did not leave the Cascina till

late, and the subsequent delay in obtaining ices, and perhaps rather longer time than usual consumed in the eating them, made us later than usual before we attempted to drive home; and before we reached the Piazza del Duomo it was sufficiently dark to make some ceremony performing by torch-light within the church throw out a very startling stream of splendour as we passed the door. We stopped the carriage and I got out to see what it might be. The whole expanse of Michael Angelo's octagonal choir was strongly illuminated, but the *vast rest* of the fabric remained in total darkness; so that it seemed as if we were walking up to a circle of fire, from which issued a low and mournful chaunt that appeared slowly to make its way upward into the immeasurable darkness above our heads, and then expire.

On reaching the marble skreen, and looking between its columns, we perceived a bier on which was stretched the body of a young man in the habit of a priest. A considerable number of persons were collected round him, lay, as well as clerical; and as it was very evident that there was no distinction of persons, we ventured to draw near and watch the ceremonies with which the priests assembled there took their last leave of their young brother. These appeared to consist at that moment, only of a profuse sprinkling of holy water, which each of the ecclesiastics who stood near, bestowed

upon him in turn as they moved slowly round the corse. But even this operation, simple as it was, became impressive from the effect of the surrounding scene. Had none of the lights been high enough to throw their rays upon the gigantic architecture beyond them, it would have been, comparatively speaking, nothing. . . . The choir would have appeared a large illuminated chapel, and that would have been all ; but as it was, the sort of halo that seemed to divide the light from the darkness, stretched high enough, and wide enough, to catch the towering columns and awful-looking arches of the aisles : not showing them, but only showing they were there, with precisely that degree both of certainty and uncertainty respecting their existence, and their form, which produces the very perfection of "darkness visible."

While earnestly gazing at all this . . . . turning the eye from point to point, to catch all that was most picturesquely-mysterious, and looking from time to time at the pale corse to note "what ceremony else" might follow, the blood seemed suddenly to run cold in my veins as I perceived the head to move, and gently to shake itself from side to side upon its sepulchral pillow, as if displeased at what was going on ! I certainly did not scream . . . but *why* I did not is more than I can tell you, for there was quite enough of the *fearfully startling* in what I saw, to have excused it. . . . It might be, perhaps, that I had not time, for my son immedi-

ately whispered to me "That boy at the head of the bier took hold of the dead man's cap, and produced the movement."

After this, as there was nothing more, equally effective, likely to be seen, we walked away, the low monotonous notes of the chaunt following us.

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Like all other places in Italy, I believe, Florence is full of processions. . . . They appear, however, for the most part, to be neither very large, very splendid, nor very much attended to, even by the common people; a few dirty little boys (generally lending their voices to the chaunt, if there be one) is often the only *cortège* beyond those officially employed. Not long after arriving here, however, I one day saw from the windows a very numerous, and a very pretty train, consisting of a long string of little veiled maidens, all daintily dressed in white, and showing only enough of their young faces to make it brilliantly evident that they had Italian eyes. The business in hand seemed to be one of those impious mysteries intended to represent the presence of our Saviour; and on this occasion He was personated by a beautiful child of about three years old, riding upon an ass. A great number of gaudily-dressed men attended Him, personating I know not what; and this principal group was both preceded and followed by priests and abundance of surpliced attendants, all carrying torches or candles, and all singing as loud as they could scream. What it

all meant, I know not, but the principal personages forming the procession were extravagantly ridiculous in their attire, and for that reason, as I presume, sufficiently attractive to draw a larger crowd after them than appears to be usual on similar occasions.

There is another procession of very frequent recurrence in the streets, which is of a very different sort, and as full of real interest as this is devoid of it. I mean that formed on all occasions requiring the services of the brethren of the Misericordia. In no country have I heard of an institution so admirable in its design, so affecting from its origin, and so impressive from the duties attached and the privileges accorded to it. The society of the *Sœurs de la Charité*, so far resembles it, that in both cases attendance upon the sick is a vowed and faithfully-practised duty; but the institutions resemble each other in nothing else; nor can there be any parallel drawn between the Society of Holy Women, who, having withdrawn themselves from the world, devote their lives exclusively to this peculiar species of Christian charity, and that of the Italian Misericordia.

This admirable and most profoundly Christian confraternity, is said to have been first formed in that fatal year, the date of which Boccaccio thus solemnly gives: “Erano gli anni della fruttifera Incarnazione del Figliuolo di Dio al numero pervenuti di mille trecento quarant’ otto;”—which, as

all the world knows, was that of the frightful visitation of the Plague at Florence. Then it was, when man fled from man, and, more horrible and stranger still, when woman ceased to watch and soothe her dying fellow-creatures—then it was that a small society of brave and holy men associated themselves together by a vow, that they would fearlessly go wherever suffering called them. Such, however, was the horror of infection throughout the city, that no persons known to be thus exposing themselves to the danger of it, would have been permitted free entrance anywhere; and for that reason, or it might have been, I think, for the still holier one of not letting themselves be known as the performers of the good deeds thus done, this truly holy brotherhood enveloped themselves in the dress which they still wear, the black folds of which cover the wearer from the top of the head to the ground, and most effectually prevent their being recognised, no aperture being left, save small holes for the eyes and mouth. The society, thus nobly created, separated not when the horrible visitation which first brought it together passed away; but, on the contrary, has become one of the most marked, as it is one of the most noble, features of the Tuscan states, and is now extremely numerous. The number is, indeed, unlimited, and contains persons from all parts of the country, closely bound together by one common faith and one common tie,—but that tie so secret and mysterious,

that many of the members live and die without knowing who or how many are united with them. Yet can they, like freemasons, make themselves known to each other when they meet, should such recognition be necessary, by secret signs and words known alike to all, but known to themselves alone. These men, including in their number many of the very highest rank, (among which Princes, and even Popes have been numbered,) are bound by a solemn oath to hold themselves ready, whenever called upon, either by night or by day, to go to the aid of any who may want them, whether suffering from sickness or from accident. Nay, if an individual be assaulted by an assassin in the streets, no brother of the Misericordia can pass within reach of knowing it, without being bound to hasten to his succour.

Secret as are the laws by which they regulate themselves, or rather the manner in which these admirable laws are put in practice, no society can be more regularly organized. A certain number of the brethren are selected from the whole body, as directors, of which ten are bishops, and twenty unbeneficed priests. . . . And from among the laity they select a certain number of nobles, and double the number of plebeians; from among these, twelve are circumscribed every four months to officiate, six called captains, and six counsellors. To these are added a hundred and five of the brethren called *giornanti*, seven of whom hold themselves constantly in readiness to attend any special summons, or to obey the sound

of the bell by which they are frequently called. But this is only for the ordinary wants of each day; any extraordinary necessity is provided for promptly and readily by extraordinary aid. Another portion of the society is bound to collect the charitable contributions of the public by personal applications, which, be it observed, are *never* refused. The smallest offering may suffice, but *something* is always given whenever a masked and shrouded brother of the Misericordia asks for it. There is something queer in the idea that one *might* be asked for a *paul* any day by a sovereign prince, if one happened to be met in the street by one of these mysterious-looking unknown. I wonder whether any one was ever curious enough to guess at an eye-beam, or at air and gait? . . . All joking apart, however, I do truly believe that no human institution ever commanded more deep-felt and universal reverence. . . . Nor does the obvious conjecture of its being probable, in a Catholic country, that such a society may be entered by the rich and the noble for a limited time (which is a stipulation permitted) as an act of penance, in any degree lessen the respect which it is calculated to inspire.

They have one very singular privilege attached to them, which reminds one of the passage in Scripture — “*Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.*” Once in every year they may demand a free pardon for one of their community, if it should



so chance that one among them has committed a crime rendering him amenable to the laws; and that, even should his crime be such as to make his life the forfeit.

Whenever this happens, the ceremony of asking, and granting the pardon, is studiously made as imposing as possible . . . . and very properly so, for it is no light thing to be demanded, or accorded. As many of the Order as can be collected assemble together, and proceed in their solemn robes, each carrying a palm-branch in his hands, to the esplanade in front of the Grand Duke's palace, and there they receive from the sovereign the act of grace. They are then led by the president of the tribunal to the prison, and entering its walls receive there him who "was lost, and is found again!" . . . upon which he puts on the habit of the Order, and joining himself to the party who have come to seek him, walks forth with them a free man.

One of the duties of this holy brotherhood, and one which is regularly and constantly performed, is visiting the prisons, and praying with those who are condemned to death. Should it ever happen that this office is performed by a brother who has himself lain under condemnation there, his feelings melt, and must lead him to lend his prayers heartily! That this institution is of great and constant utility, may be inferred from the fact, that it is next to impossible to pass through the streets of Florence without meeting them in the performance of their

duty. Sometimes they are carrying the sick, or the maimed, to the hospitals, . . . sometimes passing to the homes of sufferers to attend upon them, . . . sometimes carrying those who have expired to the grave. The species of respect manifested to them as they pass along, tells plainly in what estimation they are held ; I know not how it might chance to be in other countries, but I think it would be impossible to see a brother of the Misericordia jostled in this.

I went into their little Church, which is in the Piazza del Duomo. It is said to have been erected soon after the scourge which had given birth to the Order had passed away ; and it is said also that it is built over the pit dug to receive the dead. It is a mournful-looking little place ; six of the brethren are in attendance there night and day, that in cases of urgent need all may know where to find them. Divine service is duly performed there night and morning, and a few candles burn unceasingly upon the altar. On the floor of the Church were many of their dresses . . . together with biers and palls, all gloomily ready for immediate use.\*

\* \* \* \* \*

There is but one way of seeing the beautiful, or rather, perhaps, picturesque Bridges of Florence, and that is by *walking* over them . . . on them . . .

\* I owe the above particulars concerning the Order of Misericordia, partly to Mr. Bell's delightful book on Italy, and partly to the oral information received from an Italian gentleman at Florence.

and . . . near them. That of the Santa Trinità, which, by the way, is not only picturesque, but really very elegant, commands views both up and down the river that equal, if they do not surpass, those seen from the different bridges in Paris. The Ponte alla Carraja is in itself neither very picturesque, nor very beautiful; but the views from it, particularly up the river along the noble quays, are charming. But the bridge I best love is the Ponte Vecchio, with its little jewellers' shops, and its mysterious corridor over them; which, from the moment you are told it is there, becomes an object of intense curiosity, though all you can see, if you break your neck to look up at it, is only the ugly form of the iron-work that protects its little windows. By help of some perseverance, however, my son and I contrived to trace the course of this private and royal communication from the buildings of the Ufizj, from some apartment of which it opens to the Pitti Palace, where, in like manner, in *some* chamber it has an entrance. More exact intelligence upon this important subject I have not. There was one point of this long course at which we were very nearly baffled, but mastered the difficulty at last by discovering that it passed through a church, above the door of entrance, and behind a *grille* that is visible from the church below. At that end of the Ponte Vecchio which is farthest from the Medicean palace, is a fountain, which I had driven past some dozen times without remarking; but in this

walking expedition we observed it more closely, and perceived that, though the fountain is but a small one, it supports a very spirited Hercules and Centaur, which we learned afterwards was the work of John of Bologna.

From the bridges the Arno looks incomparably better than anywhere else; and had I seen it only thence, I might perhaps have been able to keep up a little more of the feeling with which I came prepared to look at it. No river in the world ever made so deep an impression on my fancy; partly, I suppose, from exaggerated description, but more, I suspect, from the manner in which it has connected itself in my imagination with certain gentry poetically called ITS SWANS. And truly I do feel somewhat ashamed of myself, for having, in so very matter-of-fact a manner, taken it for granted that the real river must be worthy of them! Dante, indeed, when he says:

“ ———Per mezza Toscana si spazia  
Un *fumicel* che nasce in Falterona,  
E cento miglia di corso nol sazia,”

gives no great idea of its splendour.... But it is quite sufficient that he should have mentioned it at all, to explain *why* I longed to look at it.... Not that he was over civil either to it or its banks; for, as he plainly confesses, he did not choose even to call it by its name, if he could help it; and is reproached for this repugnance.

Tu parli d' Arno

———Perchè nascose

Questi 'l vocabol di quella riviera

Pur com 'uom fa dell' orribili cose ? ”

While for its sinning banks, he says, in replying to this reproach :

“ Non so ; ma degno

Ben è che il nome di tal valle pera.” \*

If he really thought so, he would have been wiser not to have named it at all, either by implication, or otherwise . . . . for it *may* chance to be remembered—thanks to him!—long after the drying-up process, which so many people declare has begun upon it, shall leave no other trace where it has been, than its great high road of pebbles. . . . But peace be to its shallow wave, while it *does* run, and let all who wish to see it to advantage look at it, as I said before, from the bridges of Florence !

It was in the course of this same walk, undertaken chiefly for the purpose of seeing these bridges, that, finding ourselves near the gloomy walls of the Borgello prison, we determined to examine it as far as might be ; and with that view entered the fine old court which, though approached by a solemn-looking portal, seems as free to all comers as the Grand Duke's Piazza. Further than this, however, we could not penetrate ; but it is worth

while to go so far, as the architecture is that of Arnolfo Lapo, and the structure as little changed in appearance by the lapse of ages, as any human structure can be. It was converted from a palace to a prison towards the end of the thirteenth century: which must in fact have been but a few years after it was built; and this is allowing sufficient antiquity to its present condition to satisfy any reasonable antiquary. I suspect, too, that though called in guide-books, histories, and so forth, a *palace*, it must have been intended from the first as a magisterial, and not a royal, residence, as the city arms (a pair of lions) adorn the gate, and the walls of the court are covered with the armorial bearings of Podestas without end, who, when holding this high municipal appointment, made it, I presume, their residence, as it is styled as frequently "Palazzo del Podesta," as "Prigione del Borgello." After staying a month or two at Florence the massive forms of the old Palace architecture become so familiar that they are looked at, comparatively, with indifference; but I could not help thinking, as I stood contemplating this Borgello, and its still more gigantic neighbour, the Palazzo Vecchio, that if they were seen in any other part of the world, they would be considered as monstrous, both from their immensity, and the rude grandeur of their construction. All the works of Arnolfo appear, more or less, to bear the same character; and if ever the architecture

of any age or country might be looked at as symbolical of its history, it surely may be this. . . . It is more easy to feel strongly, than to express rationally, the evident connexion between the genius of Dante, and that of the age in which he lived. . . . Strength, boldness, and the inspiring consciousness of power, seem to have been at work, both for good and for evil, among those who have left traces of themselves in Tuscany, at that period. The lesser virtues, and the lighter graces, do not appear to have been born till afterwards. They were the younger children of civilization, and may be petted and played with, while the majestic elders of the race are looked up to with veneration and with awe. May not the architecture of Palladio, and the poetry of the *Aminta*, be said to bear the same relation to each other, as the architecture of Arnolfo does to the *Divina Commedia*?

In returning from the Borgello we passed through the Piazza del Gran' Duca, and were surprised by coming upon that very unusual spectacle for the streets of Florence, a closely-packed crowd. We soon perceived that the attraction which drew them together had its centre under the statue of Cosmo,—not the equestrian statue, but that which surmounts the arch leading from the Uffizj to the river. It was not very easy, and certainly not at all prudent, to attempt approaching near enough to this centre to see what was going on there ; . . .

yet, nevertheless, we did advance sufficiently to perceive that there was a stage raised in front of the arch, upon which were elevated several individuals, exceedingly incongruous in appearance and in occupation, some being clothed in the ordinary garments of sober citizens, and others in party-coloured suits that seemed borrowed from the ambulant wardrobe of a merry-andrew. The sober gentlemen appeared to be employed in writing, and the others in performing gesticulations and gambols so perfectly unintelligible that we were induced to ask some of our neighbours what they were about. We then learned that the scene before us was the drawing of one of the numerous Tuscan lotteries of which we had heard so much.... and this accounted for the extraordinary eagerness and earnestness of attention, in many instances amounting to painful agitation, which we remarked in the crowd.

This is a subject that I have heard much discussed, and, in one instance, considerably at length, by an Italian. There is, and there can be, no second opinion upon the subject.... These lotteries are the greatest blot upon the Buon' Governo.... and the offices where the tickets are sold are to Florence and to Tuscany generally, what our gin-palaces are to London and to England. Nothing can be more distressing than the descriptions I have listened to of the scenes that take place in and about these fatal offices. The



poor creatures, insane with wild hopes, which every imaginable device is practised to excite, sell everything they possess on earth rather than not possess themselves of a ticket. Persons have been seen stripping themselves nearly to nakedness on the very threshold; and never does the eve of a lottery-drawing arrive, that the Monte del Pieta does not receive a number of beds that seems perfectly incredible. These, when the frightful fit is over, are often redeemed by mortgaging the labour of the next starving week; yet such is the madness of this imaginative and easily excitable race, that the same thing recurs for ever, and for ever, to the utter and absolute destruction of thousands! This is an evil that most loudly calls for the interference of the state; and under a prince, who is so unquestionably, and so nobly anxious to promote the welfare of his people as the present Grand Duke of Tuscany, one cannot but hope that it will not long call in vain. We all know that taxes must be imposed in every country, and that no popular clamour whatever can be so utterly undeserving of attention as that raised occasionally against paying these most just and lawful debts to the government that protects us from outrage of all kinds; but on the other hand, it is equally true that the deepest wisdom should be exercised upon the manner and direction of their imposition. And if there be a worse than that of lotteries,

I think the Prince of Evil has yet to teach it to mankind.\*

\* While transcribing this letter for the press, we are listening to the truly patriotic hymn of gratitude and praise for the bold and masterly measure which has come between England and her difficulties, in the shape of an Income Tax. We may paraphrase the text, and say, "that if there be a *better* way of conquering such difficulties we have yet to learn it. England, and her Minister, too, may be, and must be, proud of the manner in which this measure has been welcomed."

## LETTER XVI.

Opera at La Pergola. — Dinner Party at a Villa. — Beautiful Residence of Mr. Walter Savage Landor's family. — Careggi, the Villa Residence of Mr. Everett : Cosimo, and Lorenzo di Medici. — Pic-Nic Monstre to Pratolino. — Madame Sacqui. — Painful Exhibition. — Anticipated Congress of SAVANS. — Museum. — Boboli Gardens.

Florence, May, 1841.

WE have been doing a great many gay things since I finished my last letter. . . . We have seen a beautiful Opera-house, the Pergola, and heard an indifferent Opera so badly performed there that I feel no great inclination to go again. . . . We have dined at a very beautiful villa occupied by two American gentlemen, at the distance of a mile or two beyond the Porta San Gallo, where we not only partook of a very elegant and superb entertainment, but the far richer treat beside of much agreeable conversation, which the presence of Mr. Everett, as well as of many other agreeable people, insured to us. At this very charming villa, whose name I ought to remember, but do not, I was struck with one of those prettinesses of device by which the Ita-

lians sometimes beguile us into believing that we are cool, when it may be that the fact is much otherwise. In going from the entrance-hall to the drawing-room, we passed across a small chamber, the floor of which was painted, and admirably well for the purpose, to represent a shallow river, through the clear, cool-looking waters of which we had to make our way. The ripple of the water; the pebbles, which here and there seemed to offer themselves as little stepping-stones; the aquatic weeds upon the banks, and the delicious shade thrown over the whole, produced an effect when entering from beneath the beams of a six-o'clock sun which was exceedingly delightful. . . . We have also visited two other pretty villas! . . . . One occupied by Mr. Savage Landor, and whom I had hoped, on hearing his name mentioned as its owner, I might have been fortunate enough to see; but in this I was disappointed: the exquisite critic of Dante and Boccaccio not often, as it seems, indulging in the day-dreams which the haunts of these familiar friends might be thought likely to inspire. We had, however, the pleasure of an introduction to his very amiable family, and of looking through windows, and from a terrace the beauty of which can rarely be equalled. Our other villa excursion was a visit to Mr. Everett and his family, where, in addition to the pleasure which such intercourse can never fail to occasion, we

had that of finding ourselves at Careggi, that most interesting perhaps of all the Medicean villas in the immediate neighbourhood of Florence, yet the only one, I believe, which no longer continues the property of the sovereign. It is beautifully situated—as are, in fact, all the Florentine villas; but it is chiefly remarkable for the historical associations annexed to it. It was built by Michelozzo, as a suburban residence for his patron the first Cosimo; but, though roomy and luxurious as a summer residence for a private family, has no architectural splendour about it. It was, nevertheless, an especial favourite among the dwellings of Lorenzo the Magnificent, who made it the scene of some of the most distinguished literary meetings of his most distinguished literary age. A statue of Plato was solemnly placed in the gardens of this villa by Lorenzo, who caused them to be laid out according to his notions of the groves of Academus; and on every 7th of November, the anniversary of the philosopher's birth was celebrated there by a splendid festival. Mirandola, Poliziano, and Ficino were among his most frequent guests, and they held together a sort of Platonic academy in a pretty portico, still existing unchanged. Among all the spots so sedulously sought for, and visited, in the hope of finding traces of *cinquecento* greatness, I have seen none that has so well contented me as Careggi: *Cosimo Padre della Patria*, died there on

the 1st of August, 1464; and Lorenzo the Magnificent, after having passed many of his happiest hours within its halls and groves, expired there in the year 1492.

The accounts of the death of this great man, (who, although he died before he had fully completed his forty-third year, has left so many memorials of greatness behind him,) are so various, or rather so utterly contradictory, that it is difficult to believe any of them. That the physician, Pietro Leoni, who certainly was in attendance on him, was thrown into the deep draw-well in the court is stated by many who agree in little else, and it may therefore perhaps be reasonably received as true . . . but whether he was thus murdered because he had poisoned Lorenzo, or only because he did not cure him, it seems very difficult to make out. . . It is said that this physician, who was a celebrated astrologer, predicted his own death, and the manner of it; . . . and I think we have only to believe this statement in order to acquit him of the murder of his master, as the wise man could hardly have failed to connect the probable dependency of the latter event upon the former. All this vague, and fabulous sort of mystery, however, instead of lessening the interest of the Careggi villa, very greatly increases it, setting the imagination into a most agreeable ferment, and permitting us to believe at last whatever theory may best suit our preconceived notions. Perhaps of all the views round

Florence, not exactly of the city, but of its neighbourhood, the most extensive is that which we obtained from the singular corridor running round the Careggi villa, immediately under its roof. It would make, first on one side, and then on another, and so on, all round, a famous painting gallery, from whence to produce a panorama of Florentine scenery. And its being the *locale* of the life and death of Lorenzo di Medici, would give it great interest.

Another of the gay exploits I have been boasting of, was the being included in an expedition which has obtained among the English *beau monde* of Florence the descriptive *sobriquet* of LE PIC-NIC MONSTRE. Between forty and fifty persons, (and certainly "on pleasure they were bent,") agreed to betake themselves *en masse* to one of the Grand Duke's rural possessions, called Pratolino. I do not call it a villa, because though it has been one, and that too exceedingly celebrated, it can be called so no longer, as nothing but the extensive and beautiful gardens remain; the mansion having been taken down, or rather having taken itself down, some years ago. The cause of this downfall is said to have been the exuding of such a quantity of water from the innumerable hydraulic contrivances of the fanciful architect, Buontalenti, that the very foundations of the building were undermined by it; and the manner in which these pretty toys had been constructed, had been

much, too subtle to permit any architect, unacquainted with the ingenious Bernardo Buontalenti's mysteries, to apply a remedy. So down came the splendid erection of Francesco, one of the great Cosmo's sons, and certainly the dispenser of no small portion of his enormous commercial wealth, for no less than seven hundred and eighty-two thousand crowns are said to have been expended on this "Pratolin, re de' Prati," as Tasso called it. This costly hydraulic plaything was erected by Prince Francesco, expressly for the use and pleasure of the fair and frail Bianca Capello, whose tragic end, as well as that of her lover, lends a sad and romantic interest to another royal villa, the Poggio di Cajano . . . where both were murdered!

But during the time that the unfortunate beauty continued at Pratolino she seems to have enjoyed all the honours usually accorded to the favourites of Princes. Tasso has more than once condescended to sing her charms, as well as those of her beautiful residence . . . the pretty diminutive appellation of which he alludes to repeatedly.

"Dianzi al ombra di fama occulta e bruna,  
Quasi giacesti, Pratolino, ascoso ;  
Or la tua donna tanto onor l'aggiunge,  
Che piega alla seconda alta fortuna  
Gli antichi gioghi l'Apennin nevoso  
Et Atlante, et Olimpo, ancor sì lungo  
Ne confin la tua gloria asconde e serra  
Ma del tuo picciol nome empì la terra."



All that is now left of these extravagant water-works is what is to be found at the celebrated grotto on the borders of the lake, where John of Bologna, whose genius, as well as that of the poet, seems to have been laid under contribution to pleasure the fair mistress of this fairy paradise, has left a portentous *capricciosità*, in the shape of a gigantic figure, said to be sixty feet high, though sitting! Its popular name is l'Apinnino, but some critics call it Jupiter. The gardens are very extensive, and very beautiful, and greatly more deserving the name of English gardens than those of the Poggio di Cajano . . . some of the trees are magnificent. Our party *monstre* was very pleasant, and would have been more so had the weather been favourable; but unfortunately so much rain fell during the day, that we never left the shelter of the rustic lodge where we dined, in order to explore the leafy beauties of this regal paradise, without returning to it in double quick time, and generally with more than enough water to remind us of the hydraulic peculiarities of the place.

Our Composite dinner, however, was really superb; and the champagne flowed as freely as if impelled by the contrivances of Buontalenti himself. . . . But it was quite in vain that we attempted more exploring after the repast was over . . . and so, making up our minds to be exceedingly happy without it, we first contrived to get some very respectable coffee . . . which, considering the size of

the party, is saying a good deal for the talents of the serving-men . . . . and this being dispatched, a fiddle made itself heard among us. Chairs, tables, glasses, decanters, and coffee-cups, were all driven from the ground, and a goodly party of waltzers set off, giving every indication of not caring one farthing whether it rained or not.

Another of our dissipations was not visiting any more old palaces, but paying our compliments to antiquity of another kind . . . . namely, a very, very, old woman. To our extreme astonishment, we were some days ago informed that MADAME SACQUI was about to enchant the Tuscan metropolis, by a series of the most difficult performances ever exhibited on the tight rope. I imagined that the daring advertiser must be a descendant of the Madame Sacqui I remembered in the days of my youth, upon whom the slipper of her great ancestress had fallen. But I was quite wrong. . . . . It was no descendant. . . . . It was the *immortal* Madame Sacqui herself! This seemed so very nearly to approach a miracle, that, although the entertainment promised was not one that could ever be of a very inviting kind, we determined to be present at it.

If wonder and astonishment could have sufficed to give pleasure, then might we have been *extravagantly* delighted at this unnatural exhibition; but this not being the case, a very near approach to positive pain, was the result. We were told that this preternatural old woman was seventy, and our

## PAINFUL EXHIBITION.

box being, unfortunately for us, very near the stage; we saw her features with sufficient distinctness to feel persuaded that this was no exaggeration. The exhibition was a very terrible one. Strength and activity, in a degree that at any age would have put the possessor of them apart from the rest of her species, as something out of the ordinary course of nature, displayed by a wrinkled crone who looked as if she had reached the very last stage of human existence, had something so dreadful in it, that I doubt if any could have been found sufficiently light of heart to have made a jest on the subject. It really was *tremendously horrible*! If, when yielding to the pressure of actual want (which of course can alone explain the business)—if, while thus exhibiting herself for bread, the advisers of the poor old woman had recommended her making her appearance in the dress, and with the appurtenances of a witch, making her demi-volts on a broomstick, and spinning aloft, like one sustained in the air by some power unknown, I dare say we should have all shuddered; but at any rate there would have been something poetical in the emotion. But how do you think we must have felt at seeing her decked out with all the meretricious decorations of an opera girl of eighteen? And then, after performing every sort of gymnastic impossibility upon the ropes on the stage, she set off, with an enormously heavy-looking flag in each hand, to walk to the very highest part of the large

Theatre, over the heads of the people in the pit!... I fully expected that some dreadful catastrophe would be the result, and so I believe did every one else; for there was a sort of extraordinary stillness through the house, that told eloquently enough of some common feeling of no light kind . . . . but when on her return, the horrible old sorceress stopped midway and waved her flags aloft, there was a burst, and a scream, that she, I suppose, took for applause, which was almost deafening, and then we got up, and made our escape, rather ashamed perhaps of having been among the crowd who had looked upon such an unseemly spectacle.

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Florence is much occupied by its expectations of the approaching congress of *Savans* which is to be held here in September. Last year it was at Turin, and the year before, at Pisa. On both these occasions the meetings were well attended, and replete with interest of various kinds; but on the approaching occasion, a very splendid convocation of talent is expected; for the Grand Duke appears to interest himself most cordially in the business, and is giving much money, as well as much zeal, to render the meeting brilliant in every way. Such preparations, with the sovereign taking so active a part in them, would be interesting in any country; but it is more especially so in one of the states of Italy, where the most remarkable feature of policy, for some years past, seems to have been a systematic attempt

to crush and smother all intellectual efforts among the people. A sort of fête, of which the shade of their great Galileo is to be the hero, is to be incorporated with the business of the meeting, and the preparations for it are of a very enduring, as well as of a very costly, kind. Florence possesses many memorials of this great man ; his manuscripts, his books, and the instruments he used, are among them. These, I understood, are to be collected from the various state-repositories in which they are lodged, and formed into a distinct Museum, for the reception of which a very splendid room is building under the same roof with the magnificent Musèò Fisico, which makes so distinguished a feature in the Grand Ducal Museum. This room is to be called the Tribune of Galileo, and there a statue to him is to be solemnly inaugurated in September, in presence of the assembled *Savans* of Italy.

These preparations for the meeting, have been extended to the cleaning and re-arranging all the rooms of this vast collection ; and the consequence is that, for the present, it is closed to the public. But by the interest of a foreign diplomatic friend, we have been permitted to see it ; and great would have been our loss if we had not ; for it is, I believe, one of the finest Museums of Natural History in the world. The numerous rooms and galleries which it occupies have been admirably formed and arranged in a mansion, or upon the site of it, which was purchased by Duke Pietro Leopoldo from the Torrigiani

family, and which, being adjoining to the Palazzo Pitti, and to the Boboli gardens, now forms a magnificent feature of the Ducal residence.

At last, too, we have found time to walk through these famous Boboli gardens, and exceedingly handsome they are, furnishing a fine specimen of Medicean splendour, in this branch of luxury. The statues are very numerous, and two of them, near the entrance, in porphyry, are interesting as being the first work performed by any modern artist in that very unmanageable material. There are, likewise, various marbles to which the guides affix great names; but though the effect they produce in their leafy, or watery, retreats, is very good, there are few of them so placed as to challenge a very critical examination. The most beautiful spot in the gardens, to my fancy, is that which commands the view of Florence, and its surrounding Apennines, with that marvellous multitude of villa residences which speckle their sides, like an innumerable flock of sheep spreading wide over some gigantic pasture. Well might Ariosto say—

Se dentro un mur, sotto un medesimo nome,  
Fosser raccolti i tuoi palazzi sparsi,  
Non ti sarian da pareggiar due Rome.

## LETTER XVII.

M. de Gräberg. — Agricultural Improvements of Tuscany. — Count Serrestori, Marquis Gino Capponi, Marquis Cosimo Ridolfi, Patrons of Science. — Fiesole. — San Miniato. — Female Penance during Lent. — Bell of the Bargillo. — Departure of Convicts for the Galleys. — Mass at the Duomo on Whit-Sunday. — Party at the house of Alfieri. — Fêtes on the eve of San Giovanni and the day following. — The English at Florence.

Florence, June, 1841.

WE have made the acquaintance of a singularly-intelligent man, who, though perfectly deaf without his trumpet, contrives to converse by the aid of it in such a manner as to make his society extremely valuable, for he is a perfect cyclopedia of information. This gentleman, the Count Gräberg de Hemsö, who, if I mistake not, is by birth a Swede, is librarian to the Grand Duke, as well as one of his chamberlains, and by his kindness I not only saw the duke's library well, but obtained a great deal of general information respecting the country. It is not, perhaps, to a chamberlain of the sovereign that I should generally look for the most accurate information respecting the state of a country . . . . For though he may be likely enough to know a good deal, he may be

likely enough, also, to keep it to himself. But in the case of M. de Gräberg it is not to his gossip, but to his enormous erudition that one applies, and in doing this you are sure to get real, genuine, information. It may be very possible, that if you asked him an indiscreet question he might make no answer at all; but when he speaks it is with such a copious pouring forth of knowledge that I doubt if he could have power to stay, or to modify, the stream to suit the occasion. He has, with a power of mental suction (if I may use such a phrase) that is most extraordinary, acquired an immensity of erudition, which flows forth when he talks to you with an impetus that really seems beyond the reach of control. From conversation with this gentleman I have acquired a clearer idea of the actual state of the country than from any other source. . . . I speak, however, *solely* of the *matériel positif* of its prosperity. . . . *Of course*, I should not take equal liberty with the name of any one who had entered with me upon themes, the discussion of which implied any approach to confidence. No such names will ever be traced to their owners through the medium of my pen. From M. de Gräberg I learned many interesting particulars respecting the rapidly-improving state of Tuscan agriculture. If former rulers of Florence made their commercial wealth the engine by which they rendered her a museum of art, her present sovereign, while a most



faithful and munificent guardian of all she has thus accumulated, appears determined that, in addition to being the *custodia* of all these treasures of art, she shall now show herself to the world as the best patroness of those who labour in the great *studio* of Nature. Tuscany may already fairly be called the garden of Europe; and if the present system of scientific improvement be continued, she will become an *agricultural* garden, not only precious to herself, as a source of domestic wealth, and of wealth, too, of which the acquirement, in its very labour, is the greatest national blessing, but of important advantage to the whole world. For there is no country in Europe in which agricultural experiments of every kind can be so advantageously tried; and it is a mistake to suppose that countries less favoured by soil and air, will be unable to profit by such experiments. Experience in agriculture, learned from Tuscany, may be converted to the use of other lands as easily as the plants of different climates may be cultivated in nearly all. I well remember when a multitude of the flowers and shrubs which now endure unscathed the severest of our English winters, were sheltered in hot-houses and conservatories as delicate exotics.

Perhaps, there is nothing that more clearly demonstrates the real character of the present Grand Duke of Tuscany than the deep and active interest he evinces on this subject; nor is there, in

my opinion, any fact that more forcibly proves the progress of civilization, properly so called, throughout his dominions, than the manner in which the theme is spoken of as one of the highest national importance. On no occasion have I felt inclined to say, in an accent of disparagement, "What is he whose talk is of bullocks?" . . . . though it is possible I may have said in my envious heart, "What is he whose talk is of steam-engines?"

I have heard a very brilliant triumvirate of names mentioned as among those who most strenuously support the cause of improvement throughout Tuscany . . . . these are the Count Serrestori, the Marquis Gino Capponi, and the Marquis Cosimo Ridolfi. All these noblemen are said to profess liberal opinions, yet all of them are, I believe, among the chamberlains of his Imperial and Royal Highness; and the first of them, well known for many able publications of great public utility, has recently been made governor of Siena. But it is necessary to hear these scientific and every-way-enlightened men spoken of as they *are* spoken of here, in order to appreciate the value of the guarantee which their good standing with the sovereign offers to the people.

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We have again mounted the hill of Fiesole, and though this time we did so with a larger party, we forgot not to pay our compliments, more respectfully than before, to all the antiquarian

treasures of her churches. . . . These are many, and of much worth; but, surely, there never was a place, excepting just, perhaps, the bank that overhangs the Falls of Niagara, where it was so very difficult to care much for anything under the shelter of a roof. . . . Moreover, we had such a sunset! . . . Oh! what a blaze of rosy light dazzled us for a few moments, and then became melted down into that sea of liquid amber which in this country so constantly bathes the west at eventide! I never know which to admire the most, between the violet-tinted shadows on one side of the landscape, and this yellow light on the other. But if by the "Tuscan artist" Milton meant Galileo, he should not have placed him

"At evening on the top of Fesolè,"

for it is quite certain that he would have been found looking down upon the earth instead of up to the moon.

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There is another height from which so fine a view is obtained, that every one who visits Florence should mount it. Not, indeed, that it can compare with that of Fiesole in extent, for its principal charm lies in showing the city itself to advantage; but in addition to this, San Miniato has other sources of interest. It was at this convent that Michael Angelo raised the famous bastion and fortifications which were declared to have been so useful in

assisting to keep the invading army of Charles the Fifth in check . . . and for the purpose of erecting which, the brave artist returned with such generous speed to shut himself up within the gates of Florence, in the hope of being useful to her. It is said that, having placed a cannon on the top of the fine old tower of the convent church of San Miniato, he preserved the belligerent tower itself from all danger of hostile attacks in return, by surrounding it on all sides with the woollen mattresses of the community, a precaution which answered completely. The interior of the old church is full of antiquarian interest, and is said to have been built by a bishop of Florence as early as 1013. The columns are antique, having been taken for the purpose from a Pagan temple.

The convent buildings, which still exist in good repair, are no longer the residence of any religious Order, but are used during Lent as a place of retreat and prayer, for any pious Florentine ladies who may wish to expiate a few of the sins of the past carnival by meditation. We were shown the little rooms where these acts of penitence are performed,—sometimes for three days, sometimes for six, as the case may require. They are very clean and snug-looking, though not abounding in any very luxurious accommodation. Food of the most simple kind is furnished to the penitents, but they are not permitted to receive the attendance of their own servants. The church is, of course, open to

them at all hours, but they are not permitted to extend their wanderings farther. I wonder whether they bring any books with them? . . . or any carpet-work? . . . It is hardly possible they should be able to pray all day long. . . but, perhaps, this may not be required. . . Perhaps the sitting for a few hours each day in perfect mental abstraction may make a part of their penance. Can ladies living in the world have sufficient self-command to perform this? . . . They must have great power of purpose if they can.

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The heat of Florence is becoming almost intolerable, and we are only waiting for the grand popular fête of San Giovanni, to quit it for the Baths of Lucca, where we are told that there is more of shade, and less of sun, than in any other place in Italy. The very name of shade is refreshing! . . . And a hint of its being really possible that the sun will not go on staring at us all day long, as he does here, is music to my ears. . . We still go and eat strawberries and ice at a few parties; still drive every evening to the Cascina; are still faithful to the universal point of *réunion* before Donay's . . . and T. and I still wander now and then under the shadow of the mighty Medicean palaces, in the hope of seeing something or other that we have not seen before. . . As we did this a few days ago we were startled, while standing at the foot of Cosmo's statue, and gazing at the Loggia dei Lanzi, by hear-

ing the solemn tolling of the most remarkable-voiced bell that I ever listened to. . . . It was impossible to doubt that it announced something awful, and lugubrious; and after listening to it for some time, without being able to discover exactly whence it came . . . for it was too near to be from the Campanile of the Duomo, and too distant for the tower of the Palazzo Vecchio . . . my companion, bidding me remain in the shade, where I had a support to lean against, and all that is architecturally most beautiful in Florence to regale my eyes, went off to inquire what it might be; and presently came back with information which proved we were right, both in thinking that we had never heard that awful bell before, and also in surmising that it had some solemn meaning in the slow and exactly-regulated return of its deep note. It was the noted bell of the Bargillo prison which now tolled to solemnize the departure of a party of criminals who had been doomed to the galleys for life, and were about to be removed in a carriage still more dismal-looking, as I soon perceived, than that used for the conveyance of our convicts from the prison to a somewhat similar place of earthly punishment. I presume that any assembling together of the people on the occasion, is forbidden, for I never saw the Piazza del Gran' Duca so deserted . . . a very few such sight-seekers as ourselves being the only part of the population assembled there, who had *bonâ fide* the power of taking themselves

off, without doing it.... notwithstanding the delusive air of activity which those arch-magicians, Michael Angelo, and the Bologna John, have left upon the limbs of their descendants there, we were very nearly the only beings that appeared alive. The bell continued heavily to toll, but all else was still and silent,

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On Whit-Sunday there was a magnificent grand mass at the Duomo, when, strange to say, we heard what appeared to us the first approach to anything like good music which had blessed our ears since our arrival in Italy. The orchestra, which was of stringed, as well as wind, instruments, was well filled, and admirably led by a person who appeared to me to be clothed in the garments of a priest. The voices, also, were amply sufficient for the occasion, and of good quality for the style required, so that on the whole we had a great treat.... which was certainly not lessened by the air of stern majesty with which the enormous fabric condescended to shelter the crowd of pigmies assembled within its walls. The whole of the Grand Ducal family were there.... excepting the babies, and the fair drooping girl.... the pale Lily of Florence.... whose delicate health has long given rise to the most painful anxiety for her life.... With this exception, the whole court in full dress, and with a numerous *cortège* were present, and pretty nearly filled the octagonal choir, which I thought looked

better on this occasion than I had ever seen it before; for hitherto it has always struck me (with all reverence to the immortal Michael be it spoken) as being too distinct, and too little in keeping with the rest of the building to produce a good effect. But on this occasion it looked like a right royal tribune, well suited to hold the honourable company assembled within it, and as being more a decoration of the church, than a part of it.

This was the first time that I had seen the great doors of the cathedral open; and the effect of the beautiful baptistry, as seen from the centre aisle through them, was charming. We had, with proper discretion, secured our places a considerable time before the mass began, and therefore saw nothing of the state carriages which conveyed the court and its attendants, till afterwards. But Florence does not outshine the rest of Europe in this particular, quite so much as she does in her galleries of art. Many of the equipages, however, are really worth seeing, from their antiquity. They look very nearly as venerable as those of Austria.

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Some evenings ago, we had the pleasure of being at a party at the house of Dr. Harding. This gentleman inhabits the dwelling that umwhile belonged to Alfieri; and we had the gratification, surrounded by a gay society, of eating strawberries and ice, in the pretty little *gabinetto* wherein he was wont to pass his hours *tête-à-tête* with the Muse of tragedy,



The position of this pavilion-like sort of apartment, might perhaps do well for either purpose. We passed to it from the drawing-room, across an open terrace that overlooks the Arno; a multitude of flowering shrubs were arranged upon it, and above our heads shone the bright moon,—not the broad red moon that forms the insignia of Fiesole, but as delicate a creature as any tragic poet could desire for his lamp, or any fair lady for her lustre . . . and all this, as I have said, might do well for either tragedy or ices. But yet I doubt if the Lung' Arno, unless after all serenades were over, could be quite still enough for the composition of Saul, . . . particularly for a poet so requiring a profound retreat, as to make him place in his lobby a placard, inscribed thus,—“Vittorio Alfieri non riceve in casa, ne persone, ne ambasciate di quelli che non conosce, e da' quali non dipende.” This, I think, goes beyond anything produced by the *ritroso* temperament of Lord Byron, between whom, and Italy's aristocratic stickler for liberty, there may, by the way, be traced a close affinity of moral peculiarity, as well as a similarity in the genuineness of their poetical *estro*.

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And now I may announce to you the important intelligence that we have outlived the fête of San Giovanni; which, considering the season, the latitude, the peculiar state of the atmosphere, and the peculiar activity demanded by the occasion, could

hardly be considered as a matter of certainty. However, I not only rejoice at being alive, but I rejoice also at having had courage and perseverance to go through the various delights of a midsummer-day's eve at Florence, for I know of no other occasion so likely to show me the picturesque old city in full activity. The day commenced, as all great days do here, with a grand mass at the cathedral, and we again enjoyed some very fine Church music, and the same royal and imperial display among the auditory. As the afternoon approached, every part of the town seemed to begin feeling symptoms of the vehement agitation which was to reach its climax at six. At that hour it was really with the greatest difficulty that our carriage made its way to the Piazza de' Santa Maria Novella, so thickly pressed together was the throng of pedestrians through which we had to pass. It would be better, and safer for all parties, if no carriages were permitted to approach the ground where this famous *Corso dei cocchi* takes place, either after or before a certain hour; and this very obvious regulation would probably be made, were it not that the equipages are expected to make part of the show; for on reaching the ground enclosed for the race, they are all permitted to enter it and drive round and round the course which is to be occupied by the racing chariots afterwards. This part of the business, when the difficulties of reaching the ground are over, is agreeable enough, for all the carriages

being open, the company in them is well seen, while in return they see well the very beautiful effect produced by the preparations for the fête, and the gay multitude assembled to witness it. The whole of this very spacious piazza (excepting the upper end, which is occupied by the church) is surrounded by houses, all of which are lofty, and not one that is not gaudily decorated from the roof to the pavement with awnings, tapestries, silk hangings, and flowers. Nor are the gaily-attired spectators who fill every window and every balcony, the least ornamental part of the show. In addition to this, there are in front of these houses, large and commodious scaffoldings erected, containing seats for many thousands; and to these admittance is obtained by the payment of a small fee. In front of the church, a very splendidly-decorated and extensive tribune was erected for the royal family, and their attendant nobles, and also for the foreign ministers and their ladies. Having made as many *giros* round the race-course as we deemed sufficient for our own satisfaction and that of all beholders, we took possession of a balcony that had been provided for us at a house commanding a near view of the royal box, and of everything else that was to be seen; so we endured the long waiting that ensued very patiently, and the better, I dare say, for the abundant supply of ice, which here is absolutely one of the necessaries of life; and happily, it never seems to fail. From this station the spectacle was really,

a very fine one, the size and form of the arena being extremely well-calculated both to accommodate and display the immense concourse of people assembled. The brilliancy of the show was increased, too, by the troops, both horse and foot, which were there to keep the ground; a precaution perfectly necessary, for nothing but their unceasing vigilance could have preserved any space at all for the exhibition we were come to see. At length, but in truth not before the light had began to fail, the notes of a trumpet were heard, and immediately afterwards four chariots . . . .intended, I believe, to look antique . . . . rushed into the enclosure, each one carrying a man dressed in old Roman costume, and driving his horses standing. I rather suspect that the failing light was favourable to this part of the exhibition, as by what I did see neither the chariots nor their drivers were very superb. The little horses, however, seemed to gallop very fiercely, and that I presume was all that was required, for the shouts of applause seemed to give very unequivocal demonstration that all the spectators were satisfied.

As soon as this was all over, and the ground in some degree cleared, we hastened home to dress as rapidly as possible; for we had to repair, with as little loss of time as might be, to the apartments of a lady residing in a palazzo, the terraced garden of which was on the Lung' Arno, where she received before the *casino* ball that was to conclude the evening, for the purpose of giving her friends an

opportunity of seeing the fireworks which were to be let off from the two bridges, between which her house was situated. We arrived there just in time to witness this beautiful display ; and, the *locale* included, which gave to view at every burst of light the fine towers and domes, the bridges and the quays of the city, I do not remember ever to have seen fireworks that delighted me more. It was very pleasant, too, to watch the gay and happy populace who filled the broad space between the terrace wall of the garden and the river ; they formed a mass that appeared as closely wedged together as possible, enjoying themselves with such very evident glee, yet in a manner so peaceable and orderly, as would have made the joining them no matter of alarm to the most delicate nerves in existence. Both on this occasion, and that of the *fête* in the Cascina, I was struck by the tranquil and comfortable, rather than boisterous and lively style, in which the Florentines appear to enjoy their festive holidays. They have the dark eye, and richly-tinted complexions of a southern race, but much in their apparent temperament that is not so.

The *casino* rooms are gay-looking and pretty enough, but not sufficiently large to accommodate well so numerous an assemblage as were congregated there on the eve of St. John. The crowd was tremendous . . . . and yet I declare to you that among the ladies, I positively found it required

a little looking about to discover any who were *not* English.

Of course I am always happy . . . . who is not ? . . . . to meet with English friends anywhere and everywhere ; but yet, there are certain English feelings, that are *not* gratified by observing the enormous colonies of British subjects that are planted everywhere upon the Continent. Nor do the English at Florence appear to me to hold a position sufficiently distinguished there to gratify our national feelings. Wherever some few English families of high aristocratic rank have taken up their abode, a distinguished circle is immediately formed around them, consisting generally of the best class of the English within their reach, and of the most distinguished natives of the place in which they have fixed themselves. This immediately gives a style and tone to their circle, such as English people of condition may naturally be expected to find around them, go where they will. But I confess it is matter of surprise to me, to hear of so many English families in the middle station of life, who appear to have settled themselves down among a people who positively fly before them. It is certain that many persons may be able to keep a carriage at Florence who could not afford to do so in London ; but is it possible that *this* can atone for all that makes home essentially HOME ? I am quite aware that no education for either sex can be complete, from which the advantages of travel are excluded ;

but this has nothing to do with making a residence abroad, especially in a country where the habits and manners of the people appear to mark resident foreigners as intruders. . . . . However, this is one of the many cases in which "there is no accounting for taste," and the attempting to do so, is perhaps as foolish an occupation as can well be devised.

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On the following day, that sacred to St. John the Baptist, the patron of the city, all the good folks of Florence were again thrown into what appeared to be a very agreeable ferment by another strange sort of race called the Corso dei Barberi, in which a number of horses are turned out at one end of a long street, without riders, and being goaded by spurs in some way or other attached to their bodies, (though they have the appearance of being wholly uncapparisoned,) they gallop at a prodigious and rather an alarming rate, between two closely-packed masses of men, women, and children, to the other end of it, when the one who arrives first is declared the winner, and the owner of it receives a prize.

On this occasion, as well as on that of the chariot-race of the day before, it was impossible not to be struck by the great disproportion between the spectacle itself and the preparations for it. The Grand Duke and all his family, accompanied by the whole court, all in full dress, and all conveyed in state carriages, attended this unmeaning

exhibition, with as much state and ceremony as if it had been a regular "*affaire d'état*." The streets were thronged with troops, and the houses covered with rich hangings, and crowded at doors, windows, balconies, and buttresses, ay, even to the very roofs, with company. By the kindness of a friend we were again furnished with the use of a drawing-room balcony, and again had recourse to the unfailing amusement of ice-eating to beguile the interval during which we waited before the universal shout gave notice that the horses were approaching. Considerably less than half a minute then concluded the affair, and after waiting, like everybody else, to watch the return of the state carriages, we bowed our farewell to the fête of St. John, well pleased to have seen it as an evidently long-established solemnity.

To-morrow we say adieu to Florence . . . at least for some time. But I am not without the hope of being able so to arrange our movements as to bring us here again. Adieu !



## CHAPTER XVIII.

Arrival at the Bagni di Lucca ; its Coolness and Beauty. — Early Rising.—Ponte a Seraglio.—The Serchio.—The Lima.—Destruction of their Bridges.—Ponte del Diavolo.—Bagni della Villa.—Residence of the Grand Duke of Lucca.—Club Establishment of the English. — Rouge-et-Noir Tables at the Casino.—Bagni Caldi.—Beautiful Forest Walks.—Balls in Perspective.

Bagni di Lucca, July, 1841.

I CANNOT express to you one half the pleasure I feel, at finding myself here . . . . I had no idea that any spot so abounding in shade, so sheltered from the scorching sun, so freshened by the eternal coolness of a briskly-running stream . . . . AND so perfectly free from mosquitoes . . . . could have been found in July, on this side of the Alps . . . . and the shade too, is not the thin straggling shade of olive-trees, but that of chestnut, beech, and oak . . . . It is perfect enchantment ! . . . . The hot springs, that give to the place its name and calling, rise in one of the many Apennine heights that enclose us in— and enclose us in so closely, that there might be some reasonable fear of wanting a fresh current of air, were it not that the Serchio rolls rapidly by us in one direction, and the Lima in another, constantly producing a feeling of freshness, more agree-

able than any obtained by mere extension of space. These enclosing hills are so lofty that I am assured by an accurate and scientific observer, that there are four hours less duration of sunshine here than at Florence . . . . as on the longest day the sun does not appear above the eastern hill until ten minutes before seven, and is hid again behind the opposite mountain by half past seven in the evening. No wonder therefore that the thermometer stands from ten to fifteen degrees lower at the Bagni di Lucca, than in the city of Florence. This is quite enough to make all the difference between feeling energy to walk, drive, ride, and explore every nook within reach, and a degree of languor that makes the slightest exertion painful. The first thing we did the morning after our arrival, was to set off on foot at six o'clock to reconnoitre the locality, and ascertain where and when there would be sun, and shade, and so on. It was a delicious morning, and for at least the five hundredth time in my life, I thought of Beattie's pious challenge to all sluggards; when, after enumerating all the blessings and delights of such an hour, he ends with—

——“ Ah! How can ye renounce, and hope to be forgiven?”

This lovely “hour of prime,” so precious everywhere, is ten-fold more precious in a land like this; for then, and then only, can you without fatigue or suffering climb those craggy steeps, to the beau-

teous brow of which no heels but your own can bring you, and from whence you can look out upon the teeming landscape that seems to live and breathe at your feet, showing a vigour and richness of vegetation that only this downward view of it can show to the best advantage: . . . for as to turning aside from the high road to wander through the fields, as is the manner of England, the thing is impossible; you would get entangled, fettered, stifled, cribbed, confined, if you made the attempt—a gigantic growth of Indian corn would overwhelm you in one direction, hedge rows of vines would strangle you in another, if you attempted to make your way athwart the graceful-looking, but very sturdy impediment which they offer; and lupines, hemp, clover, and French-beans, tangled in their rank luxuriance, make traps and snares in all directions; so that a walk in the fields is absolutely impossible. But among the chestnut trees the case is different. Wide-spreading forests of them, furnishing by their fruit a very considerable part of the sustenance of the labouring classes, cover these craggy Apennines to their very summits; and nothing can be more delightful than wandering beneath them, sometimes with a path, and sometimes without one . . . for though sufficiently close to produce the

——“endless continuity of shade”

which the poet talks of, they have space enough between for air, light, and landscape.

If it did not sound very much like nonsense to talk of a *labyrinth of valleys*, that is the phrase I should use in order to describe to you the peculiarity of the country into which we have got. It really requires some clearness of intellect, a thorough (which they say is an unfeminine) knowledge of right and left, and even some notion of north, south, west, and east, before you can set out upon a ramble at the Bagni di Lucca, and be sure of finding your way home again. I am sorry to say that once or twice when I have attempted this alone, I have blundered sadly; on one occasion finding myself on the wrong side of a river, and on another on the wrong side of a mountain, both blunders adding an extremely unnecessary mile or two to my walk. However, I begin now to know a little more about it, and spend several hours in the early part of every day in learning more; which, as my companion is rather a greater adept in the way-finding art than myself, will soon, I think, enable me to turn which way I will without danger of being lost.

This prettiest of bathing-places (Baden Baden, of all I have seen, alone excepted) is divided into three stations, and, considering their near vicinity to each other, three that are wonderfully little alike. The first reached in arriving from Florence, and in fact from every place, save those in the depths of the mountains, is called the Ponte a Seraglio. Here there is a parish church, various good shops, and every appearance of having long been a con-

siderable village. But in addition to this, there are now many extremely comfortable hotels in which excellent accommodation can be obtained on reasonable terms. There are also some pretty lodging-houses for those who, bringing large families, may find it both more convenient, and more economical, to set up a *ménage* for themselves. There may be some little difficulty perhaps in finding good servants, if you do not bring them; though of the *honesty* of the population there seems but one opinion, every one I have conversed with on the subject declaring that nothing like fraud, or dishonesty, is known among them. The difficulty therefore would probably be in finding a good cook; but if this could be managed, no other would remain, I believe, to trouble the housekeeper, for provisions appear to be good, abundant, and cheap. As we have established ourselves at an hotel, I speak of these matters but by hearsay, excepting in the article of fruit; the first breaking of our fast being regularly performed by the aid of figs, which are abundant, cheap, and exceedingly good.

It is at this Ponte di Seraglio, or *a* Seraglio, for I hear it called both, that the pretty Lima river runs into the more known and important Serchio. Both these streams partake largely of the feature which, with the exception of the mighty Po, I have remarked in every river that I have yet seen in Italy.... namely, that the wide but shallow bed is never more than half covered with water during

the summer season. I have seen some streams that might easily have been walked across dry-footed, though the width of their pebbly beds was such, that if covered with six inches deep of running water, they would have formed a noble feature in the landscape. I confess that these "torrents sans eau," as the Frenchman calls them, very greatly deteriorate the beauty of the country; for in every instance it is not the absence of the water that is the greatest evil, but the presence of the broad high road of white pebbles which is left. Both in the Lima, and the Serchio, however, there is a deep and rapid stream for ever running, though in a channel exceedingly narrow when compared with the width of the bed that is marked as its winter course. As soon as the autumn rains begin, however, the complaints uttered against these unsightly streams are of another kind.... no longer unsightly indeed, but they become unruly to a degree that renders them tremendous neighbours. The Serchio, in particular, is so celebrated for its overflowings, and perpetual destruction of the bridges thrown over it, that it has obtained throughout the country the epithet of *caro*, from its costliness. We first crossed this *dear* Serchio near Pisa, and through every part of its course that we have seen since, it presents the same unsightly spectacle of a stream greatly too narrow for its bed; yet I am told that in the winter it is perfectly sublime, from the immense mass of water which it brings down from the

mountains. That it is an old offender in this way is proved by the very singular construction of a bridge commonly called "Il Ponte del Diavolo," from the superhuman skill with which it is thought to be built. This bridge has sixty degrees of altitude, and still stands unshaken, though said to have existed since the year 1328 . . . while every other bridge that has been thrown across the stream, has been again and again destroyed. This singular-looking piece of antiquity, which is at the distance of about three miles from the Ponte di Seraglio, was erected by one who has left so many memorials in this part of the country, that he appears the genius and hero of it. The first bridge that human boldness threw across this unruly river was, however, not built by this famous Castruccio Castracane, but by a certain Countess Matilda in the year 1101 ; it was called Il Ponte de' Chifanti, was built of wood, and shared the fate of all subsequent attempts, save that of Castruccio. But if the boldness was that of the warrior chief, the skill belonged to Civitali, a sculptor and architect of Lucca, as celebrated in the arts of peace during the fourteenth century as his notorious employer was in those of war. From difficulties arising from the incessant warfare of the period, this most singular fabric was not completed till ten years after its commencement . . . the curious coping having been put on in 1338. The name of Ponte alla Maddalena was then given it, from the vicinity of a small

church dedicated to that saint, which was almost close to it, but which the French converted into the little inn which may be seen there now. No one visiting the Baths of Lucca should content themselves with a mere passing view of this extraordinary structure, but, though they need not walk to it as I did, should leave their carriages and walk over it. I have seen ladies go over it on horse-back; but this should not be attempted unless the horse and rider are both trustworthy, for the angle is so great as both in ascending and descending to puzzle a horse not used to it; and the bridge so very narrow, as to make the idea of rearing and swerving very natural to a timid rider. The hills on the further side of it, among which are several pretty villages, and one or two convents, look very tempting, but we have not yet got among them.

But you must now come back with me to the Ponte di Seraglio, or I shall never get you to the Bagni della Villa, which is where we are dwelling for the present, at Orlandi's comfortable hotel, called the Pelican. This Bagni della Villa is another cluster of houses, at the distance of rather less than a mile from the Ponte di Seraglio, the pretty road between the two following a deep bend of the Lima on one side, and the base of a very bold Apennine on the other. Could a tunnel be cut through this mountain, the two villages would be less than half their present distance from each other. The name of *our* village is given it by the



vicinity of the residence of his Royal and Imperial Highness the Infanta Grand Duke of Lucca. His Royal Highness has a pretty villa half-way up the mountain or nearly so; and, greatly to the advantage of the Baths, and the pleasure of all who visit them, he resides there almost constantly during the summer months. At the Bagni della Villa, there are only two hotels, but there are many comfortable lodging-houses, and they are preferred by many from their greater air of quiet and retirement .... the Ponte di Seraglio being the centre of all gaiety; for there are the gayest hotels .... there the coffee-house .... and there the handsome English clubhouse which has been recently erected and fitted up. This clubhouse, you must observe, is not of the same masculine temper as those in the neighbourhood of St. James's, but extends its invitations as much to the ladies as to the gentlemen. There is a billiard-room, card-room, ball-room, and supper-room, all well fitted up, and of size amply large enough for the place. This club, however, is, unfortunately I think, of less consequence and advantage to the society than it would be, were there no other ball-room .... and .... no other rooms for play. But close beside it is an extremely handsome structure, recently raised by a party of speculators, where the ball-room is one of the best-proportioned, best-lighted, best fitted-up rooms in Italy; and beside it, in addition to tea-rooms and card-rooms, is a table for rouge-et-noir. I heartily wish there were no

such thing at the Baths of Lucca; for though certainly it does not follow, of necessity, that because there is a rouge-et-noir table, everybody must play at it, there can be little doubt but that many will; and this can *never* be done without more or less of moral mischief to the party so engaged, let the gambling result be what it may. It is also to be regretted that the balls given at this *casino* to all the respectable company at the baths, are given *gratis* by the establishment—a mode of proceeding which to a certain degree identifies the whole society with the gambling-bank. That this identification is more apparent than real is certain, as a great majority of the persons who attend the balls never enter the gaming-room; but still I hold it as certain that the Baths of Lucca would be better, were there no *casino* at all. . . . But the immediately putting a stop to this evil would I am told, be a matter of great difficulty.

There is yet another division of this charming watering-place to be mentioned, and that the most singular and romantic of all. At a considerable elevation upon the mountain's side, higher than the Duke's villa, and at the distance of about a mile from it, is a beautifully-situated and almost Alpine little church, round which are clustered many buildings. Among these are some few of the best lodgings in the place; but there is no hotel there; and from the very steep ascent that leads to it, together with its distance from the market, and such-like conveniences, it does not seem to rank so highly

as a favourite residence, as its great beauty would cause it to do if there were no such objections attending it. There are some houses there that I believe are inaccessible to any carriage drawn by horses, and the only way of being conveyed to them is by a chair, carried by two stout Portantini, as they are called, who trot up and down the hills here with a steady, unvarying step, which makes the conveyance much less disagreeable than might be imagined. There are an almost indescribable variety of beautiful walks about this place in all directions; and at this dry season all the paths are sufficiently good to be pleasant, though many of them have only been formed by sheep, or by the villagers going from and coming to the metropolis of the *Ponte*, from their chestnut-sheltered dwellings upon the mountains. But on the hill where the last-mentioned cluster of buildings (called the Bagni Caldi) is situated, many regular walks have been cut, and properly constructed, that lead over the heights, and down again to the villa on the other side of them, through some of the loveliest Alpine forest-scenery that can be imagined: and so widely spreading are these various paths, that if the whole society were to be simultaneously seized with a romantic epidemic, and start off together in search of the picturesque, they might all wander about for hours without having their different musings interrupted by meeting. Such sulky propensities, however, do not seem likely to show themselves here, for from some

Florence acquaintance who preceded us in seeking this delicious retreat, we hear of a prodigious number of social schemes, but of none whatever that appear to require the loneliness of solitude. . . . The Duke is just arrived, and is expected to make his appearance at the first Casino ball on Monday next, where such persons as are strangers to him, but desire the honour of being received at the palace, are to be presented by the Marchese Boccella, one of his chamberlains and major-domo; and in the course of the following week it is expected that his Royal Highness will give a ball. . . . so you may perceive that, notwithstanding all the rural joys I have been vaunting, joys of another kind await us also. After the crowded Casino ball I told you of at Florence, (where by-the-by I was almost crushed to death in the throng that ceased not, through the whole evening, to press round the no longer very young or very lovely Countess Guiccioli,) . . . after that ball, which truly after the fatigues of that festal day was a *peine forte et dure*, I should have been likely enough to decline any other within the walls of the fair but sultry Florence. But here it is quite another thing; and I can give you no better proof of the effect of this very different climate, than telling you that no one whom I have seen appears to consider that there is any heat to be feared here, sufficient to make the bringing a couple of hundred people together for the purpose of dancing in any degree objectionable. . . . In short I am

delighted with the place, and should deem it a terrible misfortune, if I had ever the pleasure of revisiting Italy, did any untoward concurrence of circumstances prevent my passing some portion of any such second visit here.

## LETTER XIX.

Visit to the Grand-Duke.—Ball at the Casino.—Preponderance of English.—Their Kind Reception by the Duke.—Infirm Health of the Grand Duchess.—Freedom from Ceremony.—Promiscuous Presentations.—Necessity of Early Rising to the Enjoyment of the Place.—Sketch of a German Acquaintance.—Pic-nic to the Convent of San Gallicano.—A Second Party to the same Place.—Change of Residence.

Bagni di Lucca, July, 1841.

HAVING had the honour some years ago of being presented to the Duke of Lucca at the mansion of the Prince Vasa at Vienna, I did not wish to pay my compliments to him for the first time upon his own territory, at the Casino, and we therefore asked and obtained permission to wait upon his Royal Highness at the palace, before the ball. I found him the same graceful and gracious Prince that I had known him before, and still the handsomest and youngest-looking father of an *almost* grown-up son that ever was seen.

This agreeable visit paid, we repaired to the Casino, where a much larger company were soon assembled than I had any idea could be contained in the three small, though scattered, villages of the

Ponte, the Villa, and Bagni Caldi.... But here again we found scarcely any but English people ! There might have been three Italian ladies, (for that was the number I repeatedly saw afterwards,) but there certainly were not more. Of Italian gentlemen the number was somewhat, but not greatly, larger ; these were the gentlemen in attendance upon the Duke .... though, by the way, two of the chamberlains present were Englishmen ; .... and there were also a few foreigners of other countries, but certainly not more than may often be seen at a ball given in London ; and no person entering the room without knowing where it was situated could have felt a doubt but that he was in England. His Royal Highness is an excellent English scholar, perfectly well acquainted with our literature, and entertaining very flattering opinions of the national character : all which is most agreeably demonstrated by his manner of receiving the large number of English strangers presented to him.

The Duke of Lucca does not hold court at the Baths, but resides at his Villa there completely as a private gentleman.... The long continued ill-health of the Duchess, who is daughter to the King of Sardinia, and twin-sister to the Empress of Austria, confines her almost wholly to her own apartments ; and the splendid palace at Lucca, as well as the royal villa of Morlia, suit better for the accommodation of a royal invalid than the very pretty but small palace at the Baths. Her Royal

Highness is therefore very seldom here, and never with the intention of receiving; and from this circumstance has arisen a relaxation of state and court ceremony, in the manner in which introductions are made to the Duke, which must be doubtless exceedingly pleasant to a multitude of travelling English who may chance to find themselves here without having known a fortnight before that such would be their destination. But this can scarcely fail of giving birth to a little national nervousness in a looker-on, lest the flattering partiality to our countrymen, attributed to his Royal Highness the Duke of Lucca, should lead to the reception of persons not precisely suited to the circle of a Bourbon descendant of fifty kings. However, this is a danger which will, I think, speedily find itself a shield in the necessity of reserve produced by its increase; for as the manifold attractions of this Italian Baden become more generally known, the resort to it of the English, who often complain that they know not where to pass safely the hottest months of summer during their Italian rambles, will so increase, that it will be found absolutely necessary to restrict the introductions (which are sought for now merely as a means of entrance to the court balls) to such a number as the rooms of the pretty little palace can hold; and then it will happen here, as it does every where else, that such persons only will be presented to his Royal and Imperial Highness the Infanta Duke of Lucca, as may



be able to *show cause* for the honour solicited to those whose office it is to present them;....a consummation this very devoutly to be wished for many reasons, and which would be a much more important advantage to the English themselves, than even to the illustrious individual who would be the cause of it.

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Our days here pass on very pleasantly, but are marked by so few "Traits of Travel," beyond the seeking out an enormously-extensive view in one direction, or a peculiarly snug retreat in another, that I have little or nothing to write about. And yet I would not that my laziness, and the propensity to that *dolce far niente* produced by the climate and the season, should prevent my conveying to you some idea of the peculiar charm of this singular region. Should you visit it, however, you must not accuse me of exaggeration or inaccuracy of any kind, if you should be unhappily beguiled into *doing as others do*.... that is to say, if you spend your days after the manner of at least ninety-nine out of every hundred who may be here. If, for instance, you lie in bed till the sun has fairly mastered our barrier-mountain, and then sit lounging over a late breakfast till the fervid heat of the dog-days makes itself felt even here—if you do this, I give you fair notice that, though you may think the baths of Lucca vastly pretty, you will know no more about the lovely mysteries of the Apennine

forests and mountains, than if you remained at home. In fact I am convinced that, go where you will, the tax you must pay for seeing the glories of nature in perfection is rising early. Those who have not tried it, have not, I am quite sure, the very slightest idea of the enjoyment it brings. In the first place, the animal machinery through which, for the present, you must condescend to receive all impressions is in perfect repair, and fitted to perform all the functions of seeing, hearing, smelling, breathing, feeling, yea, and thinking also, in the most satisfactory manner possible. . . . You might as reasonably expect to see the delicate landscape-work of nature to perfection, if looking at it through a glass obscured by dust, or vapour, as through eyes, and by means of nerves, dulled, and tamed by late rising and a hot breakfast. And then, the circumambient air itself. . . . do you really suppose it is of the same quality at one hour, perhaps, before mid-day as at six after midnight? . . . if you do . . . oh ! go and look at the difference, and you will never so blunder again. Nor is it the least part of the advantage gained by the system, that instead of increasing the feeling of fatigue, it lessens it to a degree that is quite extraordinary.

I will not, however, promise that this invigorating influence will be felt after a first trial, perhaps reluctantly made, by bringing a yawning *forçat* to some steep pinnacle, while his or her

soul is still asleep, and only dreaming of the softly-swelling pillow left below; but if the trial be made fairly, the certain result will be another, and another, and another, till the health-inspiring habit is confirmed, and the preacher heartily thanked who had brought about so pleasure-giving a reform.

Though I cannot promise you much of adventure in the course of the narrative, I am tempted to give you the description of one of the pic-nicing days which are of such pleasant and frequent recurrence at these Baths. We are fortunate enough to have a friend here .... the length of our friendship bearing no proportion, I flatter myself, to its sincerity .... who has an imagination like an instrument of music finely and firmly strung, so that no touch is lost upon it, but it can vibrate, and "discourse most excellent music" from the deepest tone to the lightest. This gentleman is a German .... an artist .... and a faithful disciple of the gentle Isaac .... all strong in favour of his being an enthusiastic lover of nature .... and such he is; and, moreover, he has repeatedly visited this lovely place before, and therefore

———"Knows each lane, and every alley green,  
Dingle, or bushy dell, of these wild woods,  
And every bosky bourn from side to side,  
His daily walks, and ancient neighbourhood;"

so that it is impossible to imagine a more accomplished *cicerone*, or a more delightful companion, than we have found in him. One of the pictur-

esque gatherings above-mentioned took us, a week or two ago, to a convent perched upon the brow of a rock that overhangs a deep ravine, through which runs a bright and rapid trout-stream. Great part of the interesting old church of this convent, and the whole of its sacristy is picturesquely excavated out of the solid rock; while a venerable portico, built before the principal entrance of the convent, has its flat roof guarded by a stout balustrade enclosing a space large enough to accommodate fourteen or fifteen persons at a dinner table . . . . and a more splendid apartment to dine in . . . . for those who sit not with their backs turned to the landscape instead of their eyes . . . . cannot easily be imagined. Our German friend, with another very agreeable acquaintance of ours as his companion, had gone to this Gallicano convent upon a fishing excursion, and invited a party to meet them there to eat of their spoil on the last day of their piscatory wandering; after which we were all to return together. All this was planned and executed . . . . but . . . . what was the *but*, think you, that sent me home unsatisfied? . . . . why the place was too beautiful! According to the received usage of all other lady-like parties, ours on the present occasion set off a little before mid-day, and just in time to reach the bottom of the rocky mountain on which the convent stands, and which must of necessity be mounted on foot, at the precise hour of the twenty-four when the heat was strongest, and the rays of

the sun most directly pouring upon the steep, rugged, and utterly shadeless path we had to climb; yet even this could not make us insensible to the surpassing beauty of scenery that surrounded us: and though exclamations of rapture were occasionally mixed with groans, such as broiling people utter, we not only reached the matchless portico alive, but with sufficient strength remaining to be conscious that it was a very extraordinary spot that we had got to. But when the dinner table had performed its friendly office, and we began to feel again a little of the energy that our climbing walk had subdued, we listened to the conversation of our two fishermen with feelings that had more of mortification than pleasure; for they talked of towering promontories to be opened by just turning a corner of rock, that they kindly pointed out at the distance of about a mile . . . . and of a bridge of unequalled wildness of position, at the distance of two; and then there were mountain-paths, and forest-paths, where no scorching sun ever came . . . . and a clear river's rocky bed . . . . and a meandering little path beside it that might be followed without heat, danger, or fatigue, and that would lead to greater beauty still! . . . . And then our German fisherman, who, notwithstanding all his imagination, has a great faculty for order, and for keeping things right, obligingly drew out his watch, and proved, by the most clear demonstration in the world, that if we did not set off upon our return home immediately, without even wasting

another five minutes to look about us, we most infallibly should be benighted; which, as we had one of the contrivance-temporary bridges over the "dear" Serchio to cross, as well as one or two rather ticklish points of road besides, was a contingency which most of the company rather particularly desired to avoid.... Now then, might I not reasonably say that the place was too beautiful? .... for had it been less so, should we have mourned this untimely leaving it so much?

But our German friend, though capable of sending us very promptly home when it was time to go, had not a heart hard enough to listen to our lamentations unmoved, and promised that if we would arrange another and a better-contrived expedition to Gallicano, he would join it for the purpose of leading us where we might see all we had left unseen before. Now though few, except our wise fisherman, ever contrive to see Gallicano properly, it is a very favourite expedition, and no sooner was our repetition of it talked of than many signified a wish to be included in the scheme; but all particulars were remitted to future consultations:.... and when these future consultations took place, it was very clear that the party was likely to be a very large one, but not that we should be at all likely to see more than we had seen before. When the important question of time was canvassed it became perfectly evident that excepting one lady, our German friend, my son, and myself,

there was not one, though the party was considerably more numerous than before, who thought it even possible to set off before ten o'clock. As the number who differed from this large majority fortunately happened to be four, (which was just sufficient to occupy the carriage we always employed on such occasions,) we quietly agreed to let all discussion on the matter drop....fixed with all the party that the dinner-hour should be three, and engaged to meet them with our contribution to the repast on the Gallicano portico rather before that hour. Nothing now remained to be settled but the day, and that was as speedily arranged as the numerous engagements of the Baths (which I must confess increase upon us very rapidly) would permit. The day at length fixed upon was the one immediately following the Duke's next ball....and really there seemed at that moment such a variety of things in contemplation that there was no choice left. The Casino ball is a good ball; and the club ball is a good ball; but the Duke's is ever considered by all the world as better than either, and accordingly it always lasts longer; few of the guests finding themselves at home after it before three or four o'clock in the morning. This was considered as promising rather hard work for the ladies and gentlemen who had declared that they intended so greatly to exert themselves as to set off by ten or a *little* after; but what sort of night's rest did it promise us who were vowed to each

other to meet in the carriage at six? Luckily we were all four very perfectly in the same mood of mind on the subject....we were all equally determined not to give up the Duke's ball, nor any part of it....and equally determined to be true to our carriage appointment at six o'clock. And so we were. I was playing whist in the Duke of Lucca's drawing-room at half past three; but nevertheless at six I was with my three faithful companions actually on the road to Gallicano! There was something of triumph in this as a proof of steadiness of purpose;....but that was nothing in comparison of the far more valuable triumph which the early rising system obtained....I believe that we were ourselves astonished at finding that instead of fatigue, we felt nothing but the most delightful exhilaration of spirits from the effect of the sweet, fresh morning air after our dissipated night. There was no dissentient voice among us....we all enjoyed that early drive to a degree that I am sure we shall none of us easily forget. Arrived at the little town of Gallicano, the quiet hostelry of which had often furnished quarters to our Isaac Walton, we soon found that by the help of an extra basket brought for the occasion, we were seated before a most luxurious breakfast-table; and though quite aware that our companions of the previous night had still full two hours more of sleep before them, we certainly felt not in the least disposed to envy them this lengthened suspension of existence. Our re-



past ended, we set off under escort of our every-way-accomplished guide, who, instead of leading us up the face of the *mezzo giorno* cliff, which we had climbed before, turned us across his well-known friend, the dark, clear stream, as soon as we had passed the outskirts of the little town; and, keeping along the path on the other side of it, brought us beneath thick chestnut shades that reached to the very margin of the stream, through a series of the most beautiful rock, forest, mountain, and river-scenery imaginable. Having abundance of time before us, for as yet it was hardly ten o'clock, we rambled on, now sitting for a delightful half hour on a fragment of rock, now reclining on the very softest of short woodland turf, under the trees, and now, with delicious idleness, making our way onward, exactly at the pace that pleased us best, without the slightest sensation of heat beyond what was delightful, or any consciousness that there could be such a feeling in the world as fatigue.

In this manner we passed before the majestic front of the towering rock which we had heard of at our last visit, and so on to the picturesque bridge, the impossibility of seeing which had then seemed so cruel to us.... nor did we find that it had been too much vaunted; it crosses the river at a spot where everything is so wild, and all approach to it so seemingly inaccessible, that it becomes a matter of wonder why a bridge should have been even thought necessary.... or who could

have been at the pains of rearing it? Certes in this remote ravine it was no warlike Castruccio Castracane, whose numerous bridges were probably built only for the purpose of passing troops from one part of the country to another . . . and not for the peaceful use of the miller or his man. I can only account for the existence of this isolated trace of human habitation, in a spot where there is at present so little appearance of its having ever been needed, by supposing that the time has been when the convent of Gallicano on the rock above was of consequence sufficient to require, and to obtain, such an accommodation. Who knows but that in days of yore some such holy and solitary riders as the Sub-prior, or the Sacristan, of St. Mary's may have come to this spot

——“ At the crook of the glen  
Where bickers the burnie——,”

and finding they could not pass to the other side, as was needful to them in the execution of necessary business, either ecclesiastical or secular, may have applied themselves to the piety or the terrors of some marauding Count, holding his stronghold in the Apennine, and obtained this bridge from him as the price of absolution? Whatever its origin, or object, we turned it now to very good account; for being in perfect shade, and of a most delightful angle for a recumbent position, Lady S——e and I immediately prepared to repose ourselves upon

it; which purpose was benevolently aided by our companions, who plucking a plentiful supply of the abounding fern that flourished beneath the trees on the bank, gave us exactly all we wanted to make it perfect. No fair fingers ever wrought cushions in cross-stitch with shades of colour so delicate, or in patterns so graceful, as those which now supported our elbows and our heads; . . . nor was there any danger, as we rested on them, that we should be startled by any sudden glancing forth of the lizards that might perhaps have been natives of the bank from whence it came; as, luckily for those whose nerves shrink from the visitations of these pretty cold creatures, they so very little affect human society that the difficulty is how to get, and not how to get rid of them. The approach of a foot or a hand sends them darting off with a quickness so sudden, and so silent, that one almost doubts whether one has seen them or no.

As soon as our friend M. de S——d had done *l'impossible* in assisting to make this bridge not one of sighs, but mayhap of snores, he drew forth his ever-ready and ever-charming pencil, and began making a sketch. I believe Lady S—— scorned to show any such craven symptoms of remembering the late revels of the night, but I must fairly confess that I went fast to sleep. . . . How long this luxurious repose lasted, I know not; but when I awoke I found our company increased by the presence of one of the most picturesque figures I ever

saw. This was an old man dressed in a pointed hat, an open jacket, and nether garments reaching to the calf of his leg, of that peculiar shape and colour which immediately recalls the pictures of Salvator. He was sitting on the parapet of the bridge, and appeared to be on terms of familiar intimacy with M. de S——. After sundry friendly questions asked and answered on both sides, he took his departure, making his way up the side of the wild hill that rose above the path we had just trod. After his departure our friend related to us a few particulars respecting him, the listening to which formed an occupation extremely suitable to the place we occupied. This tall, thin, upright, old man had, it seems, the reputation of having in his youth been one of those Apennine mountaineers who scrupled not, some half century ago, to make or mend their fortunes by the strong hand when ever an opportunity occurred. The race may now very fairly be accounted extinct, seeing that if instead of the one old man who had been our visitor, a score still continued to exist, they must in their decrepitude be so perfect a contrast to their former selves, as by no means to be considered as the same ; so we listened to the traditionary tales that still existed concerning him and those who had been his fellows, with just enough of interest to make us feel that the encounter had been very opportune . . . . but not enough to make us listen in trembling to every sound of the wind among the trees, mistaking

it for the return of the gaunt stranger, and a party of dangerous associates. The friendly acquaintance between this charming landscape figure and our friend arose during some of the frequent fishing-excursions of the latter to the neighbourhood, in one of which the poor old bandit had been found suffering from some illness, or accident, and had been assisted, nay cured, I believe, by M. de S——; and his gratitude seems to be in very proper proportion to the service he received.

On looking at our watches after this adventure, and all the talk which had followed upon it, we found that, in order to keep faithfully our rendez-vous at the convent, it was necessary that we should turn our steps towards it immediately; . . . we did, therefore, but linger for a few moments longer, to take some last looks at the beautiful spot where we had so greatly enjoyed ourselves, and finally to stand beside our artist friend under one of the arches of the little bridge, while he inscribed the names of the party on a smooth stone within it, before we set off to mount the opposite side of the ravine from that by which we had reached the bridge, and high upon the side of which stood the venerable edifice which was to be the place of meeting, and to which we had to climb by a path more beautiful than easy.

So perfectly refreshed by our long rest as quite to have forgotten the three or four miles which we had traversed in our way to the sweet spot

where we had enjoyed it, we started upon our steep upward road with good courage, anticipating nothing worse than appetites well prepared for the dinner which was awaiting us; but alas! within a few hundred yards only of the platform on which St. Gallicano's convent stands, an unexpected narrowing in the already narrow mountain-path we were following, beguiled the heedless foot of our amiable German, and though he saved himself with great presence of mind from falling down the precipice that sank beneath our feet, he so far lamed himself as to cause him, I fear, to feel more inconvenience than he would confess. But for this vexatious accident our expedition would have been quite perfect; and as it was, we had the pleasure of enjoying a very decided triumph over the late risers; . . . for soon after we reached the cool stone sofas of the old portico, we began to see distressed-looking stragglers, who by ones and by twos appeared from behind a corner which concealed the lower part of the road towards the town. The heat was by this time tremendous, and no path could be more thoroughly exposed to it, than that by which they were approaching. Had any one at that moment observed to me their harassed and suffering condition, I might have answered, like the footman when reminded of the curate's salary, "I knows it . . . and I pities 'em!" but, like him, I was totally unable, though in so much better a condition myself, to afford them

any aid, and perforce I had to watch their present encounter with the rough ways of life, with a pitying heart, but idle hand. At length, poor dear creatures! . . . . all looking as if still more than half asleep . . . . we had the happiness of finding them all assembled around us! . . . *and alive!* which was a great and heartfelt consolation. One or two gentlemen, who had come all the way from the Baths on horseback, were in much better condition than the rest; and these, upon our letting them into the secrets of our cool cellarage, magnanimously exerted themselves to restore the exhausted strength of their fair companions, by cups of wine mingled with delicious water from the ice-cold fountain of the convent. And then the scene really became very pretty. Many fair nymphs were there to whom their sultry walk had restored more than all the roses they had lost by the vigils of the night . . . . and now, scattered about on the stone benches, wisely placed by the good brotherhood with due attention to beauty and to shade . . . . their bonnets thrown aside . . . . their tresses rearranged . . . . and their bright eyes beginning to express their satisfaction at their improved condition, formed groups that greatly embellished the rude platform on which we were assembled. One beautiful girl, I well remember,—*the* beauty of the party, *par excellence*,—not deeming any shade sufficiently profound that was not sheltered from the light as well as from the heat of heaven, re-

treated into the rock-hewn church, and seated herself on a bench in the midst of it, with such an air of lovely, languid gentleness, that could the remote shrine have for ever possessed such *an image* a vast deal of pilgrim-idolatry must have been the consequence; . . . . that she was very nearly a *molten image* made no difference; . . . . it was one that "Jews might kiss" (if they could) "and infidels adore" anywhere: and that she was one who could cause some oblivion of circumstances was presently proved by two of the cavaliers entering the church after her, the one bearing in his hand a bottle of wine, the other furnished with a crystal cup sparkling half-way to the brim with the precious treasure of the rocky spring; . . . . but ere the tempting draught was mingled and tasted, murmurs anent "*desecration of the church*" made themselves heard from the lips of some stray brother of the much-reduced society, who had seen the somewhat unusual entry of the gentlemen . . . . but an immediate retreat perfectly satisfied the good monk, and we were allowed to spread our ample table in the beautiful portico above, not only without interruption, but with all the assistance that could be rendered us. . . . And here, I believe all parties soon forgot their fatigue, though no one was found hardy enough to doubt that the early-risers were by far the least weary of the party. . . . This long story will, I hope, go some way towards convincing you that, when anxious to restore your



nerves after a ball, you can do nothing better than inhale the morning air for the purpose. Have I told you that we have changed our quarters from the Villa to Taffitani's pleasant hotel at the Ponte á Seraglio? . . . . On the whole, I think we like the change. *All* the hotels are comfortable, but here you are within reach of a greater variety of walking excursions than at the Villa.

## LETTER XX.

Gaiety of the Baths of Lucca. — Popularity of the Duke.—French Plays. — Recitation by Modena. — Pianoforte by Doehler. — Proposed Improvement on Improvisation. — The Perusal of *La Divina Commedia* recommended to the Ladies of England.

Bagni di Lucca, August, 1841.

CONSIDERING the moderate number of the society assembled here, and the somewhat remote position of our retreat, we contrive to vary our amusements very skilfully, I think. . . . I believe it would be very difficult to find any one inhabiting either of our three beautiful hamlets who ever passes an evening without mingling in society. When nothing else is going on, those who have no private engagement generally assemble at the club-rooms . . . . where some play billiards, some play cards, and some perhaps waltz to the piano. . . . There is, too, a good deal of very agreeable amateur music here; . . . . the Casino ball recurs every Monday; and though last, by no means least in attraction, his Royal Highness also gives a weekly ball. Nothing can be more agreeable or more gracefully easy than these royal receptions. . . . The amiable Duke, as may

easily be imagined, is perfectly adored throughout his "English colony;" and the kind hospitality he thus extends to the large circle of English assembled here is rendered peculiarly agreeable from his chamberlain and major-domo, the Marchese Boccella, having married one of the most charming English women in the world, who presides *en dame d'honneur* at these receptions, and whose perfect manner of executing her task certainly gives a very great additional charm to these brilliant *soirées*: . . . . I never on these occasions looked at this charming woman without feeling proud that she was *English*.

In addition to all this we have an exceedingly pretty little theatre, where French plays are performed (as I believe all French plays are all over the world) admirably . . . . and, better still, we had yesterday the gratification, which we had long wished-for, of hearing the much-admired declamation, of the celebrated Modena, who is, I believe, now considered throughout Europe as the finest tragic actor on the stage. The *one night* which he was induced to give to the Baths of Lucca was devoted by him to recitations from Dante, probably from his thinking that, it being likely, nay certain, that the great majority of his auditory would be English, he should please more generally by giving the best known passages from the best known poet, than by performing a tragedy for which it would have been impossible to collect a good *corps dramatique*, and which would have probably been but

imperfectly understood if he had. For myself, I hardly knew whether to be most pleased or disappointed by this choice. I certainly did very much long for a tragedy of Alfieri, the leading character sustained by Modena . . . . but I longed, too, to hear the verses of Dante delivered with such effect as he was likely to give them; and I, therefore, willingly turned away from the voices of the river and the fell, from the setting sun and the rising moon, in order to shut myself up in a crowded little theatre in the dog-days . . . . and in Italy! and truly I would do the same thing to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow, could I gain thereby the same pleasure that I enjoyed yesterday.

The great actor came upon the scene dressed as the divine poet is ever represented in all engravings of him, when taking his ex-terrestrial walk with Virgil; this certainly identified the actor with the only corporeal Dante with whom our imaginations are familiar; but as he held a scroll in one hand, and a pen wherewith to write on it in the other, it was evident that he meant to personate the poet in real form, and in the act of composition, and not as the imaginary companion of his "gràn' maestro." I think not, however, that he could have mended the matter in any way; his figure was extremely picturesque and noble, and despite a most extraordinary defect in his features, for his nose is so miraculously flat as to be *quasi* no nose at all, it was impossible not to

feel greatly delighted by his whole appearance. His long loose robe, which was of scarlet, he managed with a great deal of *artistique* grace and dignity; and the well-known laurel on his brow, became his finely-formed head, admirably. I assure you my heart beat as he took a silent turn or two about the stage, almost as if I had seen before me this *greatest poet in the world*, freshly returned to earth after his grand *giro*.... oh! there was a strangely strong *prestige* about that familiar dress, which made me soon feel that Modena was right in wearing it; but when he spake.... when after remaining for some moments still, as waiting for the fulness of inspiration, he burst forth in deep, slow, solemn, but most melodious tones, with those thrilling opening words:....

“ Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita,  
 Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,  
 CHE la dritta via era smarrita.”  
 Etc. . . . etc. . . .

I promise you that the *goose-skin criticism*, of which I have told you, came upon me in full force, and I would not at that moment have been listening to anything else for a good deal!

Then followed.... exceedingly well managed as to its “union in division” by the dramatic skill of the reciter,.... perhaps the finest, and certainly the best known, passages in the *Inferno*: the awful opening of the third canto; the Francesca de’

Rimini episode, and that of Ugolino. The first was given in the very best style of mystic inspiration, if I may use such an expression; for the poet seemed to stand before us in the very act of seeking in his inmost soul for an inscription befitting the gates of Hell; and when he had found it, he uttered it with a sort of bitter intensity that made one tremble. The dialogue that immediately follows, between the poet and his *maestro accorto*, and the description of Virgil's little friendly act, whereof Dante so feelingly says "mi confortai," was charming in every way; being clear in enunciation, musical in tone, and profound in sentiment. In that most plaintive of love-stories, which records the affection, the sin, and the punishment of the never-dying pair, immortalized in the fifth canto, Modena showed himself a very perfect master of pathos . . . . and many of those who listened to him might have said with perfect truth

" — i tuoi martiri

A lagrimar mi fanno . . . .

But in the Ugolino passage, a power of a still higher order seemed to develope itself; nor ever, excepting when I heard Mrs. Siddons read Hamlet, did I feel a reciter to be so fine a commentator upon an author. There was nothing in the slightest degree approaching vehemence of declamation; but there was a depth of passion that seemed to glow, like the white heat of a furnace, pale from its intensity.

It was not his horrific sufferings only, but his equally horrific feeling of vengeance, which seemed to work with immortal hatred through every nerve, and that held the breath suspended as we listened. But at the moment when he uttered the tremendous words—

“ I non piangeva, *si dentro impietrai,*”

his whole look, manner, and voice displayed as much professional power as I ever witnessed; and I felt that I was wrought upon by a *mortal* of great genius, as well as by an *immortal* of the greatest. •

This very fine performance was not continuous, but relieved by music; of which, though I confess I thought it to be a matter of very secondary importance at the time, I must say a few words, because it was by no means an ordinary sort of performance which sought to divide our attention with the very extraordinary one I have attempted to describe. The instrument was the pianoforte, and it was the celebrated M. Doehler who played upon it. I have before heard this gentleman, where, from being placed at a much greater distance from the instrument, I was less able to judge of his manner of touching it, than I was last night, and, in consequence, I certainly admired it very greatly more. It is perfectly wonderful to mark the difference which such men as Linzt, Talberg, and Doehler can produce in an instrument whereof the notes are ready made for them. If I, who speak not as a

*pianiste*, but very humbly as an amateur, might venture to describe the different effects which their very different styles seem calculated to produce, I should say that Talberg, the Paganini of pianists, was the most astonishing; Doehler, the most touching; and Linzt the most inspired, and the most inspiring. To hear these three marvellous men in succession would be a feast worthy of a king—or of a *queen*.

I have been thinking, during my early and solitary walk this morning, a good deal about the species and the degree of pleasure which I received last night from the declamation of Modena; and this set me upon considering what a very delightful change it would be for the *salons* of London and Paris, if Italians of talent and feeling, whose circumstances lead them to visit us with a view to turning their ability to profit . . . what a blessing would it be for our *salons*, if these gentlemen, instead of uttering their own verses *all improvviso*, would recite dramatically those of Dante! . . . now, pray understand that I neither mean the *fade plaisanterie* of insinuating that the verses of persons in general do not equal the verses of Dante . . . nor yet the *franche bêtise* of supposing that men with the power of Modena, are as plenty as blackberries; . . . but, in very sober earnest, I lament that a degree of pleasure as great as I feel quite sure might easily be obtained by this change is never attempted; while so much real suffering from weariness, as I



have suffered, and seen others suffer from the present mode, is endured from feelings of kindness, or perhaps humanity, which rarely, I believe, produces any very solid advantage to the object of it. The advantages of such an innovation appear to me equally obvious and manifold; . . . . for even let us suppose, what in truth but seldom happens, that thoughts clothed *all'improvviso* in rhyme be really worth suspending conversation to hear, the fact is that not one in a hundred of the persons who would be perfectly well able to follow a well-known passage from Dante, understand half-a-dozen words of the crude effusions they are doomed to sit and listen to from an improvisatore, let him recite as finely and as distinctly as ever man did; and this fact alone makes the performance a folly.

I see, and I grieve to see, that an intimate acquaintance with Italian literature is *not* on the increase among us . . . . I speak not of scholars . . . . who read Italian as a sort of dialect of the Latin, and thus get at just as intimate an acquaintance with her poets, as their taste leads them to hunger and thirst for. . . . I speak chiefly of educated women, who, with all deference to their lords be it spoken, have souls as fully capable of tasting the exquisite, perhaps the unequalled, delight which her poetry can give as themselves; but among these I suspect there is a less familiar acquaintance with Italian poetry than there was thirty years ago. Mr.

Roscoe's books did much towards throwing light, and drawing eyes upon it; . . . so did the admirable publications of Mr. Mathias; but this influence seems to have in some degree passed away; and I believe it is now more easy to find intelligent women capable of giving a *catalogue raisonné*, nay a *critique coulante*, of the works of Victor Hugo, or Balsac, than of Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, or Alfieri.

Going through life without a tolerably intimate knowledge of the *Divina Commedia*, by those who have the power of attaining to it, seems to me like the wilful abnegation of a great good for which it is impossible to atone to the mind by any other thing of the same nature. Those who *have* this intimate knowledge will understand me: . . . those who have *not* will say I am talking nonsense . . . or, worse still perhaps, that I am affecting enthusiasm, etc. etc. etc. I would, however, willingly stand a good deal of this sort of pelting, could I, by my bravery, give a spur to a "fine spirit," here and there, and set them upon passing judgment upon me themselves in this matter. Methinks there is in the very machinery of Dante's poem sufficient to excite the imagination, and to send it on a voyage of discovery through regions untrod-den before, and through which no hand but his can guide it.

Many moral philosophers . . . a very noble host . . . have, both in prose and verse, gone deeply into the examination of the human soul, and have reason-

ed upon it, even as an experienced and acute physician reasons on the structure of the living human body. But where shall we find such a *post-mortem* examination as Dante gives us? . . . . In how many instances? . . . . oh ! in how many more than I dare stop you to enumerate, . . . . does he enter with a sagacity, seemingly as simple as it is majestic, into what the soul may feel after death? . . . . What living man could go on to the last, even to the

“ Poscia più che 'l dolor, poté 'l digiuno ? ”

Ma, basta ! . . . . I meant not to enter upon any criticism . . . . I should as soon think of setting off upon a promenade up the outside of Salisbury spire in order to seize the something that glitters at the top.

## LETTER XXI.

Excursion to the City of Lucca. — Richness of the Country. — Vines, but not Vineyards. — Defective in Landscape Scenery. — Cathedral. — Church of San Romano. — Madonna della Misericordia by Bartolommeo. — Royal Palace. — Library. — Autograph of Tasso. — Beautiful Effect of Sunset from the Ramparts. — Marchesa B ———, the Madame de Staël of Italy. — Visit to the Poet Cesare Boccella. — Ceremony at the Cathedral. — Return to the Baths. — Political Hints. — More Excursions. — Croce di Ferro. — Bargillo Lujana. — Prato Fiorito.

Bagni di Lucca, August, 1841.

WE have been long talking of making an excursion for a couple of days to Lucca, the very historically-interesting little capital of this State. The party arranged for this purpose consisted of the same individuals who formed the advanced squadron on the last Gallicano expedition, which I lately described to you, with the very agreeable addition of Sir T. S ———e . . . . and at length, though not without some difficulty, we have contrived to achieve it; not, however, without tearing ourselves away from more pic-nics and more parties; for, truly, no day passes without being marked by some social gaiety or other.

Upon the present occasion our determination of leaving them all behind us was strengthened by two special attractions at Lucca: one being the consecration of a new Bishop in the fine old cathedral, and the other an Opera very favourably spoken of. We had as, to say truth, we pretty generally have here throughout the whole summer, a lovely day for our drive; but the blessed brightness, though returning so punctually with every returning day, has not as yet lost its charm for us; and we hailed it joyously. Nothing can exceed the agricultural richness of the country through which our road lay; the whole territory of Lucca is a cornucopia of the most profuse abundance: Nature has done an immense deal for it, and man has not been ungrateful; for a more careful husbandry can be seen nowhere, . . . perhaps not even in Flanders. The preparations for constant irrigation are here, as in Tuscany, perfect. Those who talk of seeing vineyards in Italy do her injustice; . . . a vineyard, as seen in France and Germany, and which is very little less ugly as a crop than a field of tobacco, does not exist here. The "*clustering vine*," indeed, is found in great perfection, and very exquisite beauty; but it is permitted to climb amidst the branches of trees planted on purpose to serve it as a support, and instead of being shorn of its luxurious beauty like a crop-eared cur, it throws its gadding wealth from tree to tree, in

festoons of such exceeding richness of form and colour, that one sighs to think how soon the advancing season must rob us of its beauty. Yet this beauty is not the beauty of landscape; and the four months that I have passed in this northern part of Italy, though they have shown me a constant succession of charming objects, have disappointed me on the whole, in point of scenery. With the exception of some points on the fine road from Genoa to Pisa....and the rocks and river of Galliciano, I have seen nothing of landscape that I think deserves the epithet of FINE. I feel tempted to say with George Sand, "*Lorsque je vis l'Italie je débarquai sur les plages de la Toscane, et l'idée grandiose que je m'étais faite de ces contrées, m'empêcha d'en goûter la beauté pastorale et la grâce riante.*"....The scenery of Savoy that we passed through in reaching the Alps, has much bolder features than any I have seen since; and in point of landscape there is more to admire between Innsbruck and Salzburg than in all I have seen on the banks of the Po, the Arno, and the Serchio:...nevertheless, the land is a fair land, and for the treasures that are in it, where shall we look for its equal?

\* \* \* \* \*

On arriving at Lucca our first care was to establish ourselves at Pannini's excellent hotel, and then we set forth to see the old town. It is full

of interest, and of beauty too. The churches are numerous, extremely fine, and many of them of high antiquity. The beautiful, delicate, and highly-finished works of Matteo Civitali abound, as they ought to do in his native city, and the Duomo in particular is so rich in them that hours might be spent there delightfully with no other object than hunting for and finding the products of his elegant chisel. The shrine which encloses the celebrated relic of the Santo Volto is of his work, and though all such structures reared within a building must be considered as objectionable excrescences, the details of this are so beautiful that it is impossible to wish it away.

But of all the numerous churches of Lucca, that of San Romano is perhaps the most precious, from its containing a *chef-d'œuvre* of the very highest order of excellence, namely, the celebrated Madonna della Misericordia, by Frà Bartolommeo. This glorious picture which bears date 1515, has all that precious uninjured freshness which can be found only in works that have passed from the artist's hand to the place where we see them; .... a rare felicity in pictures of so remote a date; but which has actually befallen this, for it was begun and concluded by Bartolommeo, during a residence of some years in the Dominican convent, of which the church of San Romano is a part. Its only removal, excepting from his easel to the church, was at the time of

the thievish French invasion, and then it was secretly conveyed to the palace, and concealed under the stage of the little theatre which makes part of it. On the occasion of its return to its lawful home it was accompanied by a numerous and solemn procession of the citizens. There is another picture by Bartolommeo in the same church, and that also is a gem; but, in comparison to the exquisite finish of its brother, it is but a sketch.... but such a sketch as I would gladly travel over many a mile to see again at will.

The royal palace is almost stupendous in size, and is, both from the noble proportions of the rooms, and their magnificent furniture, a truly royal residence; certainly more befitting the royal descendant of Louis XIV, (himself a crowned king,\*) than proportioned to the mutilated territory bestowed upon the Duke of Lucca at the congress of Vienna.

The Duke's private library is a magnificent collection, containing many precious things, and among others an autograph manuscript of Tasso's. The Duke is a great book collector, and in the department of bibles is said to be fully equal to the Duke of Sussex.

\* The present Duke of Lucca was crowned (together with his royal Spanish mother) king of Etruria, when a child. I have seen money with the united heads of mother and child stamped upon it.



The great lion of Lucca, however, is, in my estimation, the drive round the ramparts. I know nothing of the kind so beautiful. The surrounding mountains seem made on purpose as a frame-work to enclose it in, and offer a view towards the west, particularly when seen as we saw it, glowing in all the splendour of an Italian sun-set, as perfect in its way as anything can be. . . . The *tone* of the landscape reminded me delightfully of Claude.

In talking of the great lion of Lucca, however, I spoke only of one breed of lions, and that not a living one. I must not omit to mention another, of a different kind — a lady lion, were it only for the great cognomen bestowed upon her. I had the honour of being presented to a lady resident at Lucca, la Marchesa B——, who I am told is called the *Madame de Staël of Italy*. Of course it was not possible in the course of a few hours, though spent very pleasantly in her society, that I could be enabled to pass judgment upon the aptness of a *sobriquet* involving praise so distinguished; but at least I can testify that I found a lady at Lucca who not only accorded the most amiable and flattering reception to a stranger, but that her conversation, not in her own, but in a foreign, language . . . . for we conversed in French . . . . was animated and *spirituelle* in no common degree. Among other proofs of kindness, she bestowed one upon me that I very particularly valued . . . . she drove me to the beautiful villa that had once been the residence of

the Princessa Elise, and which is now occupied by the charming poet, Cesare Boccella. It is long since I have seen a little volume of fugitive pieces which appeared to me so full of thought and noble feeling, as one that he published last year. I hope it may find its way among us, for it is graceful, pure, and beautifully meditative. There is one poem in it, of great, I could almost say of tremendous, power: this is an address to that portentous meteor, George Sand; and if she can read it, and still hold her course, her soul must have passed through some petrifying process which her fellow mortals cannot understand. What renders this awful address the more touching, is the evident admiration of her great power which the poet feels; his idea, too, of what so gifted a creature might be . . . ought to be . . . is beautiful, and I hardly know whether most to admire the forcible indignation or the noble regret he expresses at her falling away from her high calling. The opening of this poem, which begins "Gloria alla donna!" and which touches with a masterly hand the pure and lovely path she ought to tread, is very beautiful, and is very true; nor is there less of genuine feeling in his remonstrance:—

"Et tu Donna, cui tanto il ciel sorrise,  
 Tu que fallita a impura coppa or bevi,  
 Mentre in luce immortal viver potevi!  
 Tu ch' hai la lira dalle corde d'oro,  
 Come a sì rio disdoro

Donni il tuo sesso, che con tanto vizzo  
Vanti la gioja che al delecto è prezzo?

\* \* \* \* \*

Vaticinasti un avvenir; ma quale?  
Di libertà non è, ma di ruina:  
E la luce infernale  
Onde per tua sciagura in fronte splendi,  
Pel serto dei Profeti in van tu prendi.

\* \* \* \* \*

O sciagurata! e qual tremenda poste  
Nella temuta social ruina  
Il destino composte  
A te, que nata eri ad alzar dal suolo  
Inno di speme con celeste volo!

\* \* \* \* \*

Ma passerà la fama tua funesta  
Come della tempesta  
Il folgor passa, allor che in ciel riluce  
Sanguigna traccia di nefanda luce.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dunque genio sì vasto, aura di canto  
Sì possente, ti fu dal ciel concessa  
A maledir soltanto?" ....

And then, after some pages of very powerful eloquence, which of course cannot be transcribed here, he concludes with a tone of gentler feeling:—

“Io ti compianzo! avrei voluto in cielo  
La tua splendida via seguir col guardo  
Come astro senza velo  
Non nell’ orror della sanguigna luce  
Che in mezzo ai nemi una cometa adduce!

\* \* \* \* \*

Quest’ inno mio dove con te parlai,  
Oscuro è troppo e non verratti mai!

Ma se ti giunge, oh almen ti renda noto,  
 Che in quest' angol remoto  
 V' ha alcun che per te prega, allor che il pondo  
 Pesa su te del giusto orror del mondo !"

These remarkable verses, as well as many others in the little volume I have mentioned, had given me a very strong desire to become acquainted with their author; and very gladly did I accede to the Marchesa's proposal that we should drive to his villa before it was time to dress for the Opera. . . . We found him in his beautiful garden, dressed almost with the same simplicity as his gardener, and appearing to think a great deal more of his flowers, and the circle of mountains that sheltered them, and of the sun-set which was beginning to turn the light of heaven into liquid gold, than of his poetical reputation. I have seldom seen any one who more completely realized my idea of a man of genius. Young, handsome, nobly born, and rich, he is so completely without pretension of any kind, that one feels his consciousness of a greater greatness than any of these chances could give him, in the obviously little value he attaches to them.

\* \* \* \* \*

The moderate-sized and elegant Opera-house of Lucca was well-filled, and the performances much better, as far as the singing went, than at Florence; . . . . and the whole thing, together with the aspect of the company, had a much more metropolitan air than I expected. I had the honour of being in-

introduced to the learned Marchese Mazzarosa, the well known historian of Lucca, and conversed with him as much as one can converse in an opera box.

The following morning it was necessary (though we were furnished with tickets) to repair at an early hour to the Cathedral, as the crowd was expected to be so great as to render it pretty certain that if we were late we should fail in making our way to the Tribune in which we were to take our places. Nor did we find this statement in any degree incorrect; the majestic old church was filled throughout every part at all within reach of a sight, even a very distant one, of the high altar; and thus filled, and with all the splendid preparations which always attend the ceremony of episcopal inauguration, the venerable-looking and lofty Duomo of St. Martin had a very imposing appearance. The musical part of the ceremony was extremely well performed, and the scene altogether exceedingly impressive. His Royal Highness the Duke was in the tribune close beside us; and seated next to him was a lady who we were told was his sister. The Duchess was at Morlia, still suffering from constitutional debility.

After this ceremony, which was a very long one, was over, we employed the remainder of the morning in seeing as much of the town and its

320 churches as the time would permit, which was just enough to make us wish that we could see more, for it has an air of unspoiled antiquity about it that is delightful. The first Roman amphitheatre I have ever seen was in this city; and sufficient traces of it remain to be very interesting to one so new to Italy, though not sufficient to lay claim to any of the beauty I have always heard attributed to the form and style of these enclosures. Once more, too, we contrived to get a look from the lovely ramparts at sun-set, than which I really have seen nothing more beautiful.

On the following day we returned to the Baths in good time to keep an appointment for going to a ball; by which you may judge a little of the zeal with which we, in common with all the rest of the Lucca Bathites, employ every moment of our time in keeping the foul fiend, *ennui*, from our presence. The three villages are now just about as full as they can be; . . . every hotel, every house, every cottage is occupied; and as all the good people seem heartily bent upon amusing themselves, there is as little time lost from remissness in that way as possible. I fully expect that, in a few years, this attractive spot will become one of the largest watering-places in Europe, for the increasing demand for dwellings may readily be supplied; the stones which are used for building here may be had for the carrying, for the winter torrents, which

tear up the surface of the surrounding Apennines into those deep ravines to which they owe their principal beauty, bring down a supply of stones, which, by the aid of a little mortar, are rapidly piled into walls. It was after this fashion, I believe, that our handsome English church here was built; which church, by the way, must not be forgotten when enumerating the advantages offered by the Baths of Lucca, and the many proofs given by its liberal-minded sovereign of his kind indulgence to the English.

But, notwithstanding all I say of the gaiety of this sweet place, you are not to imagine that it is at all impossible, or even difficult, to live the life of a hermit here, if you like it. You may know everybody, or you may know nobody . . . . you may be at balls three times in a week, and occupied in riding parties, driving parties, dining parties, and pic-nic parties every day, and all day long . . . . if you like it; but, if you do not, you may easily turn a deaf ear and a blind eye to all our gaieties, keep company with the sun, moon, and stars, and hold converse with the spirits of the fell instead of gossiping with our beaux and belles.

In our own case, we seem to have mixed the two systems together; our early rising giving us ample opportunity for being as solitary and sublime as we like, without losing any of the amusement offered by the society assembled here. And

to say the truth, *we* think, like everybody else when investigating their own plans, that our scheme is the best; for, beyond all doubt, it would be sad work to pass eight or nine weeks in such a place as this, and not make an intimate acquaintance, nay a familiar friendship, with all the prettiest nooks within reach; while, on the other hand, you would be very sure to lose much pleasure if you did nothing else; . . . for, besides the pleasant circle of the English, you may be sure of meeting, from time to time, intelligent people of all lands; . . . for do not the intelligent people of all lands visit Italy? . . . and do not all visitors to Italy . . . or, at least, a good many of them . . . come to revive themselves at the Baths of Lucca? From some such wanderers I have picked up various scraps of information: *par exemple* . . . I have learned that Rome and Modena have declared that they will not permit their subjects to attend the approaching meeting of scientific men at Florence. This is being very fearless in the expression of their fear; . . . for is it not proclaiming with a loud voice to all the world, that they do, verily and indeed, set their influence and authority to the full extent of the power they possess against the great cause of scientific research and improvement throughout their dominions? I see not the possibility of any second interpretation; and, truly, this is affixing a badge upon themselves, which,



till they had chosen to take it and wear it, one should have been loth to take the liberty of assigning them. Of *course*, the wisdom, or the want of it, to be found in this courageous piece of legislation, is to be referred to Rome; for Modena, not much of a noun-substantive at any time, is said to be at present bound to peculiar obedience to St. Peter's, in consequence of having, not very long ago, taken the liberty of hanging a priest convicted of some tolerably strong offence, without asking leave at the Vatican; and that this temerity excited a displeasure which is now in the course of being appeased by a good deal of ultra submission. It is Rome, therefore, that must abide all the inferences to be drawn from this act, and she may, perhaps, feel disposed, more than ever, to dislike all the "vulgar tongues" in which she may hear quoted "BUT IF THE LIGHT BE DARKNESS, HOW GREAT IS THAT DARKNESS?" Perhaps, there be those alive who may continue so long enough to see and know by experience, which is the most worldly wise in this matter . . . . His Royal Highness the Grand Duke of Tuscany, or the Pope.

\* \* \* \* \*

Among the few Italians whom I have conversed with, both here and at Florence, though they have been chiefly young, and ardent-minded men, *all* professing liberal opinions, and *all* appearing to think that in this the whole English

nation collectively must agree with them, and therefore that there was no occasion whatever for restraint in uttering these opinions, I have never yet heard anything approaching to what we should call revolutionary doctrines. Wishes, desires, aspirations, most touchingly profound, that such alterations in the laws and constitutions of their different states should take place as would bestow on them the liberty of thinking, and of expressing their thoughts . . . . these I have listened to again and again . . . . and so ably pleaded for, so gently and philosophically reasoned upon, that it seemed only necessary for those who have power to grant it to hear what I heard in order to feel that truth is truth . . . . and that in the long run NOTHING can prevail against it; but, alas! . . . . there be those who will not hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely . . . . Nevertheless, as there be others who do, there seems to me to be a very tolerably good chance that ere very long the sturdy young Hercules' common sense will succeed in strangling all the various reptiles that still venture to raise up their unsightly crests against him. That popular sanguinary revolutions are among the worst of these reptiles, seems, as far as I can judge, to be as strongly felt by the best and noblest spirits of Italy as it is possible to desire; nor do I believe that the disorderly democratic spirit of "*La Jeune*

*France*," the fear of which has done 'such' incalculable injury to the cause of rational liberty throughout the whole world, is more liked or approved by *La Giovane Italia*, than by those who would still keep her blinking, and blinded, instead of permitting her to take the high place which all "foregone conclusions" so incontrovertibly declare was designed for her by nature among the intellectual portion of mankind. But this is an evil, which by the nature of things cannot last, and those who have the power should prepare the way for the inevitable change.

When I hear persons, who think themselves peculiarly clever, sneer at Italy as a country not competent to take care of herself, and absolutely requiring the help of some invading hand or other to save her from falling.... a sort of talk which you and I, and every one else must have listened to over and over again; .... when I hear this, I constantly find myself recalling the names that, in EVERY department of human greatness, have made Italy illustrious. I mean not the old Romans—that race has passed away; and notwithstanding the records they have left... not very numerous, indeed, but of great dignity.... records of intellectual greatness... it is good for mankind that they have passed away; for they were a blood-proud race, owing all their civilization to a people they had

enslaved, and apparently incapable, till mixed and amalgamated with other nations, of becoming as brightly intellectual as those who have succeeded to the same soil have proved themselves to be. I fully believe that it is in the power of bad government to keep a people so chained up, as it were, as to prevent their displaying their natural greatness, or doing justice to the powers of mind that God has given them; but I do not believe that government has the power of converting what Nature made the most brilliant of all the races of men, into any state that shall permanently continue the least so. The first French Revolution caused startled power to play the tyrant, and to strain herself very much beyond her natural strength, in order to check the sort of convulsive sympathetic movement which seemed to be felt more or less in all directions. Where this was done most temperately it was done most effectually; a truth which Austria knows as well as Prussia, Tuscany, or even England herself.... although it would seem that she deems it not necessary to enforce the doctrine upon her clients and dependencies. But sooner or later it will enforce itself.... And when the panic is quite over, Kings, and Popes too, may make the notable discovery that Italians are not Frenchmen; and that the country where the greatest name is now, as ever,

DANTE, is in no degree likely to assimilate itself to the country where the greatest name is now, as ever, VOLTAIRE.

Forgive me for this long political tirade, which has been poured forth quite by accident, and produced by one or two very interesting conversations which made a deep impression on me ....and which I wish that many could have heard beside myself. No people are at this moment so little known throughout Europe as the Italians.

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I dare not tell you of all our far-and-wide country excursions, for fear you should get tired, even though seated in your own arm-chair at home; but there are two or three feats which it is a sort of duty that I should charge you, in case you ever come here, to perform. One of these is, mounting to the very top of a steep Apennine above the Bagnì Caldi, which top is said to be nearly five hundred feet above the level of the Lima river! so you will perceive that it requires some courage; and if not a stout climber, I would counsel you to take a pony as one of the companions of your expedition. The spot I would have you reach is called the "Croce di Ferro," because, as you will perceive when you get there, a towering cross of iron is erected in the centre of the little table-land, that crowns the mountain. Standing beside this cross,

or, if you will, sitting at the foot of it, you will see a view that would well reward a more difficult ascent. This hill, which is almost conical, is the same whose base you walk round in going from the Ponte village to that of the Villa; and as you look down upon both, you will be surprised to find how very near together are the dwellings which the circular base of the mountain makes nearly a mile apart. The rivers Serchio and Lima show themselves beautifully, and their bridges also, from this spot; so does the picturesque church at the Ponte a Seraglio, and so does the pretty English-looking residence of Colonel and Mrs. Stisted, who, greatly to the pleasure of all who are fortunate enough to have an introduction to them, reside there during great part of every year. Further a-field, you have various bold heights intersecting each other, with every imaginable effect of Italian light and shade and atmosphere about them....some covered to the very top with forests of chestnuts, and others rocky, bold, bare, and frowning. On the highest of these is the ruin of a lone tower that calls itself Bargillo, and which forms a landmark to all the country round, as well as another favourite rendezvous for a pic-nic. In short, the view from the Croce di Ferro must be seen; it is absolutely *de rigueur*, and the omitting it would indisputably subject you to the imputation of having no soul, and being utterly un-

worthy of having any eyes. So pre-eminent indeed is the reputation of this hill, that not contented with looking down from it by the light of day, there are few who do not think it almost equally necessary to look down from it by the light of the moon also; and accordingly, it is an established custom, on the night when she rises in all her glory at the same moment that the sun sets, for friends to challenge friends to meet them there; nor is the fulness of the moon the only reason for selecting that night, for the peasants, for some cause or other that I could not learn, kindle on that same night a line of bonfires along the side of the hill opposite the Croce di Ferro, which, shooting forth their light from under the shelter of the chestnut-trees, have a singular and beautiful effect, making a sort of fiery chain round the top of the hill.

There is, moreover, another celebrated hill almost equally near the Baths, to which multitudes of English felicity-hunters resort, not solely for the pleasure of riding or walking up, in order that they may ride or walk down again, but because a little village on the top of it, called Lujana, is said to have had the honour of being the birth-place of my Lord Harrowby, whose lady-mother having mounted thither to visit a friend who had chosen that remote spot for her summer abode, found herself unable to return.

And then there is the famous Prato Fiorito,

the El Dorado of botanists, to which I truly believe that everybody ought to go, but to which I have not been because I have been scared by the accounts I have received of the dangers of the road; but, in order to inspire you with greater courage, I must confess that I never did hear of any one who undertook the adventure being either slain or wounded.



## LETTER XXII.

Extract from the *Messaggero delle Donne Italiane*. — Resolute Pic-Nicers. — Evening Drives. — Different Halting-places. — The Bridge. — The Fountain. — The Mysterious Beauty. — Roccoco Treasures. — Approaching Departure. — Projected Ball to be given by the Bachelors. — Melancholy Termination. — Fatal Duel. — Amiable Conduct of the Duke of Lucca.

Bagni di Lucca, Sept. 1841.

I COULD go on a great deal longer yet in pointing out to you the different spots in this beautiful neighbourhood, which you would do well to visit, either alone or *en pic-nic*, but I am stayed in the progress of my catalogue by a passage that I read this morning in the *Messaggero delle Donne Italiane*. The article is headed “Bagni di Lucca,” and presents a little lithographic sketch of the Ponte a Seraglio, but earnestly disclaims any intention of giving rise to poetical flights thereby, and then adds — “Se qualche delirante vi ha dato ad intendere che i Bagni di Lucca sono il soggiorno prediletto dell’ Italiano, ei vi ha detto una solenne bugia. I Bagni di Lucca appartengono, come tant’ altre cose in Italia, esclusivamente allo straniero.” . . . , Then

follows a description of the numerous English arrivals, while the Italian “spera di rinvenir sulle alture di que’ colli un piè di patria tutto per lui, e ascende i sentieri ornati di bosco . . . . ma abbassando gli occhi ei s’accorge che non è solo. Un *amatore* a cui fosse l’ignobile itinerario delle *Starke* ha rivelato quella sublime veduta, stà colassù scarabocchiando uno sbozzo pell’ album del suo *drawing-room*. . . . Piu lunge, povero Italiano, piu lunge! Ecco la scena si cambia . . . . i sentieri devengono piu ardui . . . . in fondo, mezzo nascosto dal fitto fogliame apparisce . . . . un casolare; un villano lo invita ad entrare . . . . e’ gli parle in Inglese, in Francese, e in Tedesco! . . . . ei s’allontana impazientito, e corre più lungi! . . . . I costagni divengono rari. . . . Aride rocce annunziano il vertice dell’ Apennino. . . . Ancora una breve salita, e poi ei sarà sul più alto pinacolo del Prato Fiorito! . . . . Ma appiè del viottolo è un inciampo! . . . . e l’occhio sconsortato scorge la livrea d’un *groom*, e da un lato una sentimentale *lady* che si è arrompicata fin lassù e prosaicamente seduta sulla sua sedia portatile sta scrivendo una lettera sopra un foglio a vignetta . . . . l’Italiano continua ad ascendere . . . . è giunto alla vetta . . . . all’ amplissima libera vista, il core dell’ Italiano batte piu forte . . . . la mente s’esalta, e i più energici pensieri vi bollono. . . . Ma gli ecchi rintronano svegliati dei passi dei cavalli . . . . appiè del rip-

iano s'affaccia una numerosa comitiva . . . . è un *pique-nique* ! . . . . Fuggi, fuggi, mal capitato Italiano, lo straniero l'inseque anco nel nido dell' aquila !”

Can I have the cruelty after this to point out to you any more of the romantic recesses of the Bagni di Lucca? . . . . and is it possible not to sympathise in this poor man's torments?

Fortunately for the *mal capitato Italiano*, there are some of our favourite pastimes that in no degree approach his *nido dell' aquila*, and the enjoyment of which can in no degree annoy him: one among these is the very constant and innocent recurrence of the evening drives. Excepting when the obnoxious *pique-nique* takes us into some of the mountain-recesses, alas! poor man! “beloved in vain!” we fail not . . . . I speak collectively, for I know of no exceptions . . . . we fail not to drive every evening between the hours of eight and ten, or thereabouts, for a mile or two on the high road which leads towards the city of Lucca. Sometimes, but not often, a bold innovator ventures to suggest the possibility of driving in another direction, and then the direction taken is up the Serchio instead of down, or else on the beautiful road towards Modena; but neither of these last roads are unobjectionable, for one leads over a very insecure temporary bridge, and the other soon becomes exceedingly steep . . . . so to the Lucca road we go night after

night . . . . and night after night with a degree of enjoyment that it really seems difficult to explain. But so it is. I know finer drives, bolder drives, wilder drives, but I should be puzzled to recal any that I have resorted to so often and with so much pleasure. That everybody sees everybody in the course of this drive is a fact that certainly must count for something in calculating the sum total of its attractions . . . . and for the most part the bodies are very pleasant bodies, and the whole thing is very gay and agreeable. Perhaps, it *might* be possible to pass a few weeks at the Baths of Lucca without falling into all the pretty little dissipations of the place as we have done . . . . but it would not be very easy; and if the taste of any individual leads him to dislike it, he would do better to take up his summer rest elsewhere. The evils playfully complained of in the above extract must infallibly pursue him go where he would, short of the eagle's nest; and, if his *sauvagerie* be genuine, he must, perforce, wish himself elsewhere; . . . . but where no good reason for such feeling exists, I should decidedly say

“ Were it not better done as others use?”

and though I would be loth to follow a multitude to do evil, I feel no repugnance whatever in following the little multitude who people at eventide the road towards Lucca with such an everlasting air of

enjoyment. The curious old bridge of Castracani that I told you of, with its monstrous arch, is very often the bourn to which these drivings reach; though sometimes, if the party be conscious that their after toilet will not be a lingering one, it is pushed a mile or two farther. I often admire the sort of spontaneous ingenuity with which these monotone drives are varied. Most of the carriages make a halt at one point or another, as will and whim may dictate; and the road, running as it does between a steep hill and the river, with a very charming assemblage of landscape objects on the other side of it, offers abundance of pretty points at which to make this halt; and stop almost where you will, there is always something local and peculiar to give the spot interest. In one place is a spring of delicious and rather celebrated water, good for all sorts of maladies, I believe . . . and beside it sits on one side an old man, and on the other his old wife. Beside them are little tables holding drinking-glasses ever sparkling from a recent rinsing . . . and lemons, that true Italian luxury, together with very respectable white sugar to make you lemonade if you like it: . . . and the old couple are as full of chat as their fountain is of water, for both chat and water flow, and flow, and flow for ever. . . . At the old bridge, close beside the desecrated church, umwhile sacred to the Magdalen, we very rarely fail to see a graphic figure of another kind. . . . A young girl abides there, in the little wine-house, if

presume, who might have served Raphael for a model when his pencil intended to be most divine.... Some people call her *la Fata*, others *l'Ombra*, and others again *la Maga*; her dress is fanciful, a dark-coloured silk *bodice* always making a part of it, and her abounding black hair is arranged with a whimsical picturesqueness that made me sometimes fancy her a coquet, and sometimes "*a natural*;" but there may be, perhaps, many who will say that both conditions of mind are equally *natural*. . . . I never heard this pretty creature talk, or saw any one speak to her; but she seems to know perfectly well that she is to be looked at, and endures it philosophically, but, *toutefois*, with an air of the most perfect modesty.

Another point of the road is animated by the very constant exertions of a middle-aged personage, who is perpetually bringing forth from his dwelling by the road side some *roccoco* treasure, which *nous autres* have taught him to know "is prized beyond its worth." I was told that it was the convents, still existing at no great distance among the mountains, which furnish these relics, precious, if not holy. Sometimes they consist of a piece of carved wood, sometimes of a queerly-shaped pitcher. Once I saw the worthy antiquarian exhibiting a tolerably massive cabinet, and at another a collection of metal dishes embossed *à la Cellini*, though not quite equal in beauty to those in the Duke of Tuscany's buffet. But the gaud that most delights the ladies, and of

which I have seen at the Baths of Lucca an astonishing quantity, really beautiful, is the old lace which these convents have sent forth, and which, I am sadly afraid, instead of being extra precious as holy relics, must be considered as very sacrilegious spoils . . . . it being only too probable that they must have been stripped from altar-cloths, and holy vestments ; . . . . nevertheless the article is offered very openly for sale, and therefore it is likely enough that some portion of it at least, may have been furnished by dilapidated countesses, and not pilfering nuns.

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Our abode at this beautiful place is drawing to a close, and though I have still so much before me to see, I shall leave it with regret : . . . . nay, I am not certain that we should not be tempted to linger here a week or two longer for the purpose of watching the effect of the autumn rains upon the rivers and their noisy tributaries, were it not that the meeting of the *Savans* at Florence is fixed for the 15th of this month, which, as we intend to be present at it, leaves us but a few days more.

The conclusion of our pleasant season here, is intended to be, if possible, gayer than all the rest of it. The bachelors, of whom we have, believe me, a very gay assortment, are going to give a ball ; and the Duke, *our Duke par excellence*, the always kind and amiable Duke of Lucca, has promised to honour it with his presence. The usual custom here

at all the balls is to have no other refreshments than tea and ices; even the Duke's beautiful little *soirées*, where everything is quite perfect, and *à peindre*, are followed by no supper. . . . a table, elegantly spread with cakes, fruit, sandwiches, and excellent tea, stands ready throughout the evening for all who choose to visit it; while a profuse supply of the most exquisite ices, cease not to perambulate the rooms. But our Bachelors, being English Bachelors, declare that they will have a supper, and that they cannot take leave of the gracious Prince, who has contrived to make every one near him feel happy by his presence, without drinking his health in champagne. Heaven preserve his Royal Highness from being stunned into deafness for ever by their *vivats*, and their three-times-three hurrahs! but at any rate we have the comfort of knowing that, if the elegance which so peculiarly marks him be *tant soi peu* shocked by their vehemence, his kind heart will appreciate the feeling producing it, and they will be forgiven.

Bagni di Lucca, Sep. 10th, 1841.

It has never before happened to me to see the feelings of a whole circle of society so suddenly and violently turned from mirth to mourning, as I have seen happen here since I last addressed you. The ball of which I spoke has taken place . . . but its consequences have been most unhappy;



.... a duel followed between two Englishmen within an hour after the company separated, and the consequences have just been announced to be fatal to one of them.

Oh! that terrible Scotch phrase "*fea!*" how it haunts me!.... The fine young man who has fallen was throughout the evening in such exuberant spirits as to attract the attention of everybody; and being one of the stewards his animated gaiety was felt by all, for all shared the assiduous attention with which he performed the duties of his office.... The supper, which was extremely elegant and *profuse in every way*, took place while everything was still in apparent harmony.... The royal guest appeared to be delighted himself, as thoroughly as he delighted everybody; and the admirable little speech in which Sir Richard H—k—n proposed his health, though it was followed by applause in which the ladies could not resist joining, evidently pleased the good-natured Prince, notwithstanding its noisy results;.... and when it was ended, one of the officers of his household announced to the company that his Royal Highness invited them all to a ball and supper at the palace on the following Wednesday. The tables then broke up, and as his Royal Highness accompanied the ladies from the table, of course no one remained behind, and the dancing immediately recommenced.... I really think I never saw so happy-looking a party; everything seemed to have answered and gone well.... The

Duke, with his usual graciousness, danced later on this occasion than is his custom, and did not leave the rooms till late ; but later still did all the others stay, and it was near six o'clock before the last carriage drove from the rooms. To the very last moment (though the horrid challenge must have been given and accepted) did the doomed young man continue his gay assiduities ; and I really believe that scarcely a lady left the rooms whom he had not assisted with her shawl, or to her carriage. . . . But within two hours after the last departure, he had received the mortal wound.

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Of course a multitude of stories have been in circulation respecting the cause of this most unhappy affair ; but I believe it is now well-known that whatever might have been the immediate provocation to the challenge, the cause of quarrel between the parties was of considerably earlier date than the ball, and originated in some very unjustifiable language injurious to the deceased, and which had been too faithfully repeated to him.

If the Duke of Lucca had not before won every English heart by his condescending kindness, they would all have become his, after this fatal business ; for the deep feeling, and the poignant regret he has manifested, have deeply touched us all. In addition to the sincere sorrow which so afflicting a circumstance cannot fail to excite among the English society here, I truly believe that we all grieved

that the Duke of Lucca should have this heavy cloud thrown across the remembrances of a season, which he has done so much to render delightful. It is a melancholy business, and long will be recollected as such by many, who little thought that the unfortunate young man would ever have made so deep an impression on their memory.

## LETTER XXIII.

Return to Florence.—Preparations for the Congress of *Savans*.—Zealous Interest taken by the Grand-Duke of Tuscany in the Meeting.—Intended Inauguration of the Statue of Galileo.—Disappointment at the absence of Mrs. Somerville.—Babbage and Brown the pre-eminent English Names.—Arrangements for the daily Banquet.—Assembling of the Members at the Santa Croce.—Opening of the Congress in the Hall of the Cinquecento.—Reception of the Duke and Duchess.—Opening Speech of the President Ridolfi.—Election of the Presidents of Sections.—Anecdote of Michael Angelo's David.—Dinner at the Boboli.—Characteristic Physiognomy.—Evening *Réunion* at the Ricordi Palace.—Effect produced by the Arrival of Orioli.

Florence, Sept., 1841.

WE returned to Florence a week ago with our kind friends Sir Thomas and Lady S——e, with whom we mean to remain till the congress breaks up, and then we start for Venice. Nothing less interesting than this meeting could have induced us longer to delay visiting that long-wished-for city.... *Earlier*, we could not have ventured; having been very earnestly desired by those who knew well what they were talking about, not to enter Venice till after August was over.... as the heat there during that month and the preceding

one, is often found intolerable by *tramontanes*. We might have gone there, however, when we left the Baths of Lucca, without running any great risk, either from sun or mosquitoes, and should have done so save for this gathering together of the wise.... No meeting of the kind which has yet taken place in any part of Europe, can, I think, be compared to this, in point of interest; and the number assembled, amounting to above nine hundred, proves that it is so considered.

It is indeed impossible to witness the minute attention bestowed by command of the Duke of Tuscany on everything connected with the preparations for this meeting, without feeling that the heart of the Prince is in the business, and that he is determined, *coûte qui coûte*, that the men who come to his metropolis as the *savans* of Italy, shall be received as those only are received whom Princes delight to honour. It would have been interesting in any city to have witnessed the coming together of such an assemblage, and to have marked so zealous a reception given them by any sovereign in the world, even from the President of the United States to the Autocrat of all the Russias;.... but there are many causes which render it very peculiarly interesting here. The political state of Italy has for many years been such as to render it impossible that any general invitation could go out to her learned and scientific men without addressing itself to many who have given repeated cause for

supposing that they were more or less hostile to all the existing governments of the country.... But the Sovereign of Tuscany fears them not:.... he well knows that he has no cause to fear; and the *loyale* frankness with which orders have been issued by the "Buon' Governo" for the granting of passports of departure to whomsoever shall show a diploma as having been a member of the congress, has placed him and his government in a state of greater security from any mischief that might arise from the opinions of those so generously trusted, than all that armed guards, stone walls, dungeons, or chains could do for them.

This species of political liberality would of course be thought nothing of with us, who fear not, and care not, for all the vagaries that it ever entered into the head of man to conceive; .... neither could it be quoted in proof of extraordinary liberality in France, Belgium, or America; but *here* it well deserves attention, and should be hailed as a symptom of more enlarged views, and more reasonable policy, than it is usual to find on this side the Alps; .... it is, too, somewhat the more remarkable, from the notable contrast it offers to the policy of Rome.

ORIOLI, who I hear on all sides mentioned as THE great star of the meeting, is actually at this time an exile from the Roman States, on account of his political opinions .... and at present holds a professorship in the University of Corfù. ... And

Orioli, though the most illustrious, is by no means the only example of the same kind. This is one feature of the peculiar interest to which I alluded, and of others there are many.

What a city, for example, is Florence for such a meeting! . . . . How many majestic names, with Galileo at the head of them . . . . like mile-stones on the long line that records the history of human intellect, stand forth, and seem to sanctify its walls! Had the summons which has brought our nine hundred wise men together, been addressed to the painters of Italy, it is not quite impossible that a disagreeable feeling of having left their great models a little out of sight, might have been mixed with the patriotic pride with which they recalled their names; . . . . they might, perhaps, have looked around for Raphaels among the host, and might not have found them. But by men who have made the recondite truths of nature their pursuit, Galileo is looked back to, not as a rival, but a father. . . . And certainly no Medici of them all ever imagined a solemnity so happily appropriate, as that by which the present Sovereign of Tuscany has determined to celebrate the coming together of those whose pursuits it is his peculiar wish to foster and protect. . . . The erecting in the midst of his magnificent Museum one of the most splendid cabinets ever built, expressly for the purpose of doing honour to the great name of Galileo; the adorning it with his statue;

decorating it with paintings recording the principal scenes of his eventful life, and making it the repository of the instruments by which the immortal Star-gazer worked his way so boldly among the secrets of creation, was a work, worthy of Leopold the Second; . . . and the solemn opening of this cabinet is a ceremony worthy of being performed in the presence of all the scientific men that Italy can collect to witness it.

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I hear much regret expressed because Mrs. Somerville is not here, as it was hoped and expected she would be. Babbage and Brown are the great names that England has contributed: . . . the former is said to have been personally invited by the Grand Duke. . . . All the world are, of course, actively on the look-out for tickets of admission to all, and everything, expected to be heard and seen. . . . Sir Thomas S—— and my son have both been elected members of the congress, and therefore, our anxieties on that head are at an end, the most liberal arrangements having been made for the accommodation of the ladies who make part of the families of the members.

There is one trait of thoughtful attention in the Duke which, under the circumstances before alluded to, appears to me particularly amiable. Thinking it probable that many of the members might be inconvenienced by having for fifteen days to find their dinners at a hotel, he has ordered a daily



banquet to be prepared by Donay, the great Ude of Florence, and laid out with every attention to comfort, and elegance, in the magnificent Orangery of the Pitti Palace, which opens by many doors to the Boboli gardens on one side, while on the other it communicates with the town. To the table thus supplied the Duke contributes eighteen thousand francs, besides the very considerable expense of fitting up the *locale*, which is said to be very elegantly done. The price of admission to be paid by the guests is five pauls, (rather more than three francs,) exclusive of any extra wine which they may individually order, and the dinner ordered is at double that price. I was told that in reply to some observation made on the costliness of the entertainment, and doubts expressed of its necessity, the Duke remarked, that he conceived an easy and familiar intercourse between the studious and retired men thus brought together to be one of the most desirable results of the meeting, and that as it must be presumed that the more wealthy among them would choose to dine well, all must be enabled to do so, or this result would be lost. . . . There was both wisdom and kindness in this . . .

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The first general meeting to which the congress was invited, was to a mass, with music, to be performed in the church of the Santa Croce, and as the invitation was given in very discreet terms

....namely to all *Catholics*, without any *Roman* addition to the term, we felt justified in presenting ourselves among the congregation. The service was one of the greatest musical sublimity, and admirably well performed. The whole of the centre aisle was fitted up with seats appropriated to the members of the congress, who attended in great numbers; and the noble church was filled in every corner. It must have been impossible, I think, for any person, however profoundly indifferent to the business of the meeting, to have witnessed the scene without feeling some portion of the excitement which seemed so general. The roof which echoed the notes of the pealing organ, and its grand accompaniments, rose over the dust of Galileo.... Where could another fane have been found so fitting for a gathering together in worship of the philosophers of Italy? .... and who could help turning a glance towards the marble effigies of Dante, Michael Angelo, and Alfieri, who seemed looking on, composedly, like pale spirits from the other world, at the intellectual phalanx which might almost tempt them still to hold communion with this? I certainly never before witnessed so impressive a meeting between the dead and the living.

From this holy spot assigned for their first meeting, the members proceeded two and two .... mitred bishops and threadbare scholars, side by side, to the Palazzo Vecchio; where, in the magnificent

room significantly called *The Cinquecento*, the business of the meeting was to be opened. Happy were those who had tickets which permitted them to follow! . . . . This enormous room is said to be capable of holding five thousand persons, but its capacity was by no means sufficient to accommodate the learned assembly and their eager followers. The crowd was tremendously great; and had not the approach to the tribune, prepared for the ladies, been most sedulously and carefully guarded, the reaching it would have been utterly impossible. But many gentlemen furnished with tickets were unable to enter at all; and one of the Duke's chamberlains told me afterwards that he was exceedingly glad to escape unscathed, without having reached farther than the landing-place. As soon as the room was declared to be so full that no more could be permitted to attempt entering, a small door being opened at the upper end of the room, within the space enclosed for the Presidents of Sections, and their secretaries, the Duke and Duchess entered with their attendants, and took their places in the chairs prepared for them. Their reception was enthusiastic; I never heard Italians so noisy before. When silence was restored, the Marchese Ridolfi, who has been appointed General President of the congress, addressed the assembly, and explained the objects for which they were met, and the manner in which the business before them was to be carried on. Then followed the election of the Presidents

of Sections. The Prince of Canino, son of Lucien Buonaparte, who is esteemed one of the most accomplished natural philosophers in Europe, (in the particular branch to which he has devoted himself,) differed with Ridolfi on some point respecting the arrangements; and, having very evidently the voice of the majority against him, lost thereby, as it appeared, his position as President of the Section which he held at Turin last year, and to which it was expected he would be re-elected this. . . . This business of electing Presidents being ended, and the Duke again applauded to the echo . . . which pealed down upon us from the historic roof of Vasari . . . the vast multitude dispersed, and the members soon after repaired to the magnificent temporary saloon prepared for the banquet at the Orangery in the Boboli Gardens.

Though it was decidedly our intention to witness as often as convenient the rather uncommon spectacle of nine hundred philosophers all eating their dinners together, Lady S—— and I determined not to make our first experiment on the first day, as we should know better how to set about it, by hearing some account of the matter from our friends; and most assuredly the pressure of the crowd which we witnessed in the hall of the Cinquecento made us rejoice that we were going quietly home after it. While waiting patiently for the dispersion of the crowd, I recollected a memorandum which I had made of an anecdote recounted con-

cerning Michael Angelo's group of David slaying Goliath, and knowing that we should presently pass it in going out, I determined to take the opportunity of examining it, in order to see if any traces of the adventure recorded were perceptible. My memorandum stated, that a party of insurgent citizens having taken refuge in the Palazzo Vecchio, were defending themselves, during some popular tumult, from the Medicean forces without, by means of stones which they had found on the roof, and which they were hurling on the heads of the troops below. One of these fell on the left arm of the David and broke it into three pieces. Two young boys among the people, knowing, young as they were, how precious this statue was held to be by their countrymen, contrived, despite the bustle and even danger of the affray, to secure and carry away with them the mutilated arm, which was afterwards replaced with the most reverent care. . . . I did examine the statue as I went out, and had no difficulty in discovering that the arm had most certainly been fractured . . . . "*and most certainly repaired again by a reunion of the same morsels,*" remarked a friend who was with me, "for who but the Buonarroti would have dreamt of giving the lad David such muscles?"

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The reports which reached us after the first dinner in the Orangery were such, as instead of awakening any fears of being crowded, or in any way in-

convenienced by going there, created the most lively wish to set about forming a pleasant party for it immediately . . . . which we did accordingly, and with such excellent success, that we set off yesterday at a quarter before four, accompanied by that most important element of a pleasant dinner-party, agreeable society. The carriage-entrance to the Boboli Gardens, which is used on this occasion, is very conveniently near the edifice converted for the nonce into a temple dedicated to practical Epicurean philosophy . . . . so that we had but a few steps in the sun from the gate to the spot where we were told it would be still necessary to wait for a few minutes, till the sentinel at the entrance of the little flower-garden that spreads itself before the Orangery, received notice from within that all was ready . . . . when he, and his fellow sentinel at another gate, were to throw wide the opposing barrier and admit the guests, who stood waiting with more well-bred tranquillity for this opening than it is usual to see in any crowd waiting for anything.

Fortunately, indeed, the spot where the assembled hundreds were to make this halt, was such an one as none would be likely to complain of as a place of waiting for a longer space; for, in the first place, it was completely in the shade; in the second, it was surrounded with flowers and statues; in the third, it had a full view of the handsome and extensive building wherein we all intended presently to be so very happy; and fourthly, and lastly,

it gave an excellent opportunity to those who had a taste that way, for the examination of a set of countenances which it might be reasonably hoped would offer something a little out of the common way.

The time we had to wait for the opening of the gate was, in fact, by no means long enough to produce impatience in anybody; and when at length the signal was given, the gate opened, and the immense throng set in motion, it was matter of astonishment to all, I believe, to mark the entire absence of everything like confusion, pushing, or inconvenience of any kind. We found ourselves immediately, and without the slightest difficulty, in possession of excellent places;...in fact there were none present who did not; and this important object secured, we quietly began to look about us, and to admire the unexpected splendour of the spectacle that presented itself.

It would be no easy matter so to describe the arrangements of this room of seemingly endless length, so as to give you a tolerably correct idea of its general elegance, and its perfect comfort: I cannot say it was like this....or like that;....for I never saw anything at all like it. I can, however, tell you that it was lined throughout with fluted muslin of snowy whiteness; that the ceiling was adorned by festooned draperies of the same delicate material, and that the whole was decorated in the very prettiest manner imaginable with artificial flowers, that hung in graceful wreaths from

the ceiling, and twined themselves among the draperies of the window-curtains with charming effect. Nor was the appearance of the dinner-tables less sedulously attended to than that of the vast chamber that they filled, in double file, from end to end. Fruit and flowers blended together in many elegant devices, together with dried sweetmeats of various kinds in all sorts of ornamental dishes, covered the delicate damask; the weightier matters of the entertainment being brought with most extraordinary celerity, and in silver dishes, perfectly hot, from a range of kitchens which had been erected behind.

The dinner, in short, was excellent in every respect; and even had it been otherwise, I should have enjoyed the hour it lasted exceedingly. The good Duke's project of bringing the fine spirits he had collected into familiar colloquy, seemed to answer perfectly; and I marked many an expansive brow, showing "ample room and verge enough" for what was going on under it, that was bending towards another of like amplitude, with a degree of deep interest, that it was very delightful to watch. I saw, too, more than one meeting between personal strangers, but intellectual intimates, which said more than a thousand essays could have done, upon the pleasure produced by the drawing together of intelligences which could not meet without mutually eliciting light; . . . and then I watched delighted recognitions of old friends . . . and also the effect produced by the unexpected pronouncing of



some famous name that brought colour into the cheek and a sparkle into the eye of him who heard it;.... for when the eating part of the business was over, many of the company walked up and down between the tables, and after a time we took courage and did the same ourselves; and thus saw more of the room, and of the company, too, than we should otherwise have done.

Ere very long, however, the whole of the numerous company had wandered forth into the beautiful Boboli gardens, which, though at other times only given up to the public for two days in every week, are now always at the service of the *savans* and their friends; and here, as we slowly wandered from one beautiful alley to another, all occupied with groups of men in eager conversation, I could not be insensible to the marked characteristics of the great majority of those I met.... but oh!.... how difficult, how perfectly impossible, is it to describe them!.... There were none of them.... no, scarcely one, who looked quite like an ordinary gentleman, such as from birth to death one meets on all ordinary occasions parading in resorts preserved for what is called "*good company*;" but woe befall any one who should venture to say that they looked *unlike gentlemen*.... GENTLEMEN?.... It is exceedingly difficult to define precisely what that word may be intended to mean;.... but would any one venture to ask if they looked *vulgar*?.... We know what this means better;.... for it is not cabalistic, like

the word gentleman ; and if the question be so put, there are not many who would blunder so very egregiously as to answer in the affirmative. Alas ! . . . what it has pleased God to give us so rarely, as the legible traces of deep thinking, and fully-developed intelligence, let us not call common !

I was still more struck with the expression of these extraordinary heads an evening or two afterwards, when I had greater power of circulating among them, and moreover of seeing them uncapped, which, as the learned know, is absolutely necessary for a satisfactory examination.

The usual order of the congress-day, is this. The individuals of whom it is composed have divided themselves into sections, according to the nature of their various studies and pursuits. To each of these sections a hall . . . or in plainer English, a room has been assigned, wherein they meet every morning, for the purpose of reading such papers as they come prepared to communicate, and to converse, or debate, on the matters of which they treat. These rooms are, I believe, all under the roof of the building containing the museum, and now connected by the Duke's private entrance with the Pitti Palace ; . . . but these not being sufficient to accommodate all the sections at the same time, they succeed each other, according to the routine established by the president and his council. Before the sitting of each section is broken up to make way for that which is to follow it, the secretary makes notes of

the subjects that have been discussed, and of anything particularly important thereon which has been brought forward ; . . . and also sets down, according to the intimation conveyed to him by the president, the subjects to be discussed on the morrow. These notes are sent to press as soon as the sections separate, and the circular papers which contain them are ready for delivery to all who ask for them, at an early hour of the following morning.

The sections which sit the latest conclude their business but a short time before the hour when all assemble in the Orangery of the Boboli ; and the hours between dinner and eight o'clock in the evening are spent by each individual according to his pleasure. There are some few distinguished Florentine literati who, during these hours, receive such members of the congress as have been specially introduced to them ; and I am told that for conversational enjoyment these *réunions* are worth all the rest.

At eight o'clock the splendid saloons of the Ricordi palace, together with those containing its library, are magnificently lighted up ; and here the Marchese Ridolfi receives as many of the congress as choose to present themselves, and as many ladies as are fortunate enough to obtain tickets from the members. . . . It is here that we have the best opportunity of mixing with, looking at, and listening to, the many distinguished men who are

now in Florence; and I really think one must be considerably duller than any weed that ever grew on Lethe's bank, or anywhere else, to be insensible to the fact, that the crowd which surrounds you there is not composed of every-day patterns of humanity. . . . Nothing has delighted me more than remarking the strong and universal interest excited in this immense assembly of enlightened men, by the arrival among them of any one whose exertions in some department of the intellectual labour to which they have all devoted themselves have already been rewarded by extended fame. With his works, with the nature of the subject to which he has devoted himself, they are probably all acquainted — but himself, perhaps, they know not; and the movement of eager interest which passes from man to man, till hundreds share it, as soon as the arrival of such an one is made known, is delightful.

I have witnessed this effect on the approach of several, and our own great English names have been among them; but none has produced it at all in the same degree as ORIOLI. For some time after his arrival in the room I knew not that he was come; but I perceived that there was, beyond all doubt, some great one present whom all who were better informed than myself were desirous to see. There was a movement throughout the long gallery as universal and perceptible as the turning over the leaves of the *libretto* in a con-

cert-room; . . . but here it was the persons, and the heads, and the eyes that were turned, and all turned in the same direction. "What is it?" said I. "Eccolo!" replied some one near me. "Who is it?" . . . I reiterated. "It is ORIOLI," was the very satisfactory answer; and, thereupon, I felt exceedingly disposed to transgress all sorts of high-bred regulations, and the sedative "*Nil admirari*" among the rest. But as to getting within sight of him the attempt would have been hopeless; and I think he had been an hour in the room before I saw more of him than the effect he produced by drawing together a closely-packed knot of heads, of which he was the centre.

By-and-by, however, he found out that there were some ladies present who were old acquaintances, and upon his coming to pay his compliments to them I obtained what I so greatly desired, namely, the both seeing and hearing him speak. Moreover, I had presently the good luck of having him introduced to me, and felt, I am sure, a great deal more proud of it than he would have thought at all reasonable. Nothing can be more perfectly simple than both his manner and general appearance; but his countenance is one that well repays examination . . . and, notwithstanding a gentle air of quiet composure, which he has in common with many other distinguished men, it is not difficult to trace in his features, when he

is speaking, not only very profound intelligence, but an acute and ready brightness of intellect which does not always accompany profound thinking.

I am told, too, that he is a man of great eloquence, and that when it is expected that he will address the section (that of mathematics) to which he belongs, the room becomes crowded, not only by all who have a right to enter it, but by as many who have not as can possibly find their way in. . . . But let the pressure of the crowd be what it may, the moment he begins to speak all other sound ceases; and though his voice is far from being a loud one not a syllable he utters is lost. This is precisely the sort of statement to throw one into despair . . . first by making one long to hear him . . . and next by proving that it must be impossible to do so.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

Galileo's Villa and Tower. — Anecdote recounted by Madame Catalani. — Ceremonies at the Inauguration of Galileo's Statue. — Admission to the Mathematical Section. — The Speeches of Professors Orioli and De Bazer. — Violent Thunder Storm. — Discussion on Rivers. — Comparative Beauty of Italy and other Countries.

Florence, Sept., 1841.

THIS will be a valuable fortnight to us, independently of all the interest that the congress will give it; for notwithstanding the length of our former stay, which was rather more than two months, we still find a multitude of objects to which we are personally strangers . . . . fully sufficient to occupy all the time we have to spare for seeing them. Many magnificent churches are among the number, and many a picture, and many a statue before which we have already stood, have not yet been half enough examined. . . . So that altogether we feel, as all the other people in Florence seem to do just now, extremely busy.

Our Cascina drives have been renewed, and we again drive a little and walk a little, and talk a great deal within the beautiful enclosure that has received this rustic name. . . . But one evening we

escaped from it, and varied the scene by driving to the villa now known by the name of La Bell' Sguardo, for the sake of seeing the exquisite view that it commands, and also because it is the spot where Galileo (at this moment the hero *par excellence* of Florence) passed much of his time and made many of his observations. In the wall of the mansion is inserted a marble slab, with an inscription stating this fact . . . . and in the garden is the tower, on the roof of which he used his precious telescope.

On another evening we again forsook the Cascina for the purpose of passing a few hours with Madame Catalani Valabrique, and very delightful hours they were . . . . for not only did she again sing to us . . . . and still as nobody but her charming self can sing, . . . . but she recounted to us an adventure which had befallen her some five-and-twenty years ago, with a degree of spirit and dramatic effect that was delightful.

It seems that while making a professional visit to a certain city in Germany, she heard in every circle of a horrible phenomenon at that time enclosed within its walls . . . . namely, a woman who had been *convicted* of having committed above sixty murders ! . . . . The monster, though still a young woman had for several years followed the profession of a *garde malade*, and from the evidence upon her trial it was proved that, beyond the possibility of any doubt, she had been in the habit of making away



with her miserable patients by means of poison, which she constantly carried about her in her curling papers, and which she had never scrupled to administer whenever the poor sufferers appeared to her to linger too long !

On hearing this tremendous statement, a most vivid feeling of curiosity seized upon our *cantatrice* to behold a creature so awfully marked out as a terrific variety of the human species . . . whether this wish to see her arose from the same impulse as made Garrick visit Bedlam . . . whether she thought that any index-lines of her countenance might create ideas that should become professionally useful, I know not ; but so strong was the wish, that she mentioned it to several influential people in the place in the hope that by their interest she might obtain it. But she was assured on all sides that it was impossible . . . as the same wish had been shared by so many, that it had been found necessary to refuse its gratification in the most peremptory manner to all. Yet still the desire pursued her ; and finding herself one day seated at a dinner party, next the supreme judge of the court in which the woman had been tried, she once more stated her wish. . . . The venerable magistrate replied that he was extremely sorry to say that it was impossible to comply with it. The charming petitioner was silenced for a minute or two, and then . . . it was with her own well-remembered smile that she related it . . . and then she began to revolve in her

mind what she could do, or say, that might be most likely to shake the resolution of the recusant judge. "Je vous chanterai une jolie. petite canzonette," she replied in a whisper. An Orpheus may have power on this side the Styx as well as on the other.... A day and hour were fixed, before the party separated, when she might repair to an appointed place, and hope to be led where she wished to go. The appointment was punctually kept on both sides; and now, trembling at finding herself on the eve of doing the thing she had so earnestly desired to do, the fair philosopher committed herself to the care of the official dignitary, and proceeding with him to the prison, reached the small chamber in which this unparalleled homicide was confined. The solitary wretch was weeping bitterly, and the lower part of her face was wholly concealed in the handkerchief which she held in her hand.... but the upper part of the countenance was visible, and the animated narrator declared that she thought she had never looked upon a lovelier face. The brow was large, finely formed, and delicately fair..... the eye long, having a rich black silken eye-lash, from beneath which the big tears rolled slowly down her pallid cheeks.... Madame Catalani said that she looked at this beautiful sad face till the memory of her crimes was actually forgotten, and she herself wept too, for company.

"N'ayez pas pitié de cette scélérate atroce, Madamo!" exclaimed the judge.... The criminal re-

moved the handkerchief from her mouth . . . and in an instant, everything like beauty disappeared, leaving an expression of hard villany that it was impossible to look upon without a shudder. . . . A strong confirmation this of Lavater's theory, that though intellect speaks through the eye, moral propensities are indicated by the mouth. . . . Madame Catalani told us that before her execution this wretched creature not only confessed her crimes, but explained as clearly as she could the sort of infernal impulse which led her to commit them. She liked, she said, to see the spirit pass away, and it was where this result was doubtful among the unhappy ones whom she was employed to watch that she took means to render it certain.

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The inauguration of the statue of Galileo in the beautiful cabinet prepared for it, has taken place in the presence of the congress . . . or to speak more by the card, in the presence of all persons sufficiently distinguished to have places assigned them . . . and of as many more as could find their way in. . . . And since this inauguration a *Trattenimento letterario* has been given there to the members, by the scholars of the Accademia dei Resoluti, in which, in various orations both in prose and verse, the young men descanted on the merits of their great countryman.

We were at the Ricordi palace when the members arrived there after this *Trattenimento*, which

concluded by a hymn sung in chorus by the young men with great effect; and every one seemed to speak of the whole thing as having gone off admirably well, and given great pleasure. The absolute impossibility of assigning them places prevented any invitations being given to ladies.

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By the great kindness of a countryman who has long been a resident in Italy, and who seems to know everybody and be able to do everything, I have succeeded in my earnest wish of hearing Professor Orioli speak, and that, too, under circumstances of peculiar interest. On the day preceding that on which I heard him, the discussions in the mathematical section had ended by something a little like an attack made by Professor de Bazer upon the *eagle of Corfû*. It seems that Orioli had uttered some words towards the conclusion of the sitting, expressive of disapprobation of the manner in which professors in general adhered to established routine in their lectures, though often aware that by quitting it they might throw more light on the subject and convey more instruction.

On hearing this, Professor de Bazer replied, with some warmth, that the accusation was unmerited. To which Orioli answered, that he felt obliged to his learned friend for commenting on his words, in a manner which would justify, and indeed render necessary, that he should enter

somewhat more at large upon a subject in which he felt greatly interested....but that he could not thank him for doing so at a moment when time would not allow him to enter upon it fully; ....whereupon Professor Amici, the Astronomer Royal, and President of the Section, gave notice that Professor Orioli would be heard in reply on the opening of the section on the morrow....A great sensation was produced by this, as the desire of hearing Orioli speak is universal, and the certainty that the next morning would afford this gratification to as many as could get within hearing, caused an impulse towards mathematics more general than is usual amidst so miscellaneous a throng as that which fills Florence at present. By the way, I should tell you that, oddly enough, the mathematical section is the only one which keeps seats reserved for ladies....about a dozen chairs being placed for their use in front of the table at which the President sits. Perhaps this compliment to the whole sex may be in consequence of Mrs. Somerville's having proved that the science *may* be found within reach of female intellect.

In addition to the excitement of knowing that Orioli was certainly to speak, was added a great wish to hear the Professor de Bazer also, who is reputed to be one of the best speakers in Italy....Despite all the probable difficulties of the enterprise, however, my kind and zealous

friend Mr. D ———, volunteered to escort me ; and nothing short of a much more reasonable fear of suffocation than I saw before me could have prevented my accepting the offer. The mathematical section is the first in the daily routine which occupies the room where it is held : and this was in my favour ; for fine ladies here are not disposed to be earlier than elsewhere, and were the less likely to be in the room before me. The crowd of gentlemen, however, was prodigious ; and though several of the ladies' seats were unoccupied when we arrived, I think it would have been impossible to reach them had I not been permitted, with one or two others in the same predicament, to enter by a French window that opened near the President's chair from the garden. Soon after I had the good fortune of being safely seated, the grand Duke and Duchess followed through the commodious window, and took their places beside Professor Amici. This compliment to the expected speakers was the greater because their Royal Highnesses had never before made their appearance there.

The room was fitted up with rising seats, and above these a gallery runs round the whole apartment . . . every inch was occupied, every corner where a human being could stand being packed with great *mathematical* nicety . . . and, naturally enough, where so many human beings had to arrange themselves, there was a good deal of that

sort of *susurro* which, without deserving the name of *talking*, produced quite sound enough to make me certain that if it continued I should be unable to follow the speakers. But when Orioli arose the silence became instantly so profound that it seemed as if all the living beings around me, save one, had suddenly been turned to marble.

I wish I had Orioli's speech before me . . . for I should like nothing so well as to pillage it for you; . . . but I might as well wish for the moon. . . . His appearance is neither dignified nor imposing in any way; but I think it is impossible for the power of mind to go further in redeeming the want of personal pre-eminence. At first, I thought his manner awkward, and he held in his hand a pocket-handkerchief very ungracefully rolled into the smallest possible compass; . . . but as he proceeded, either his manner changed, or every defect in it was forgotten. . . . What became of the pocket-handkerchief then, I cannot say; . . . all I know is, that every word he uttered seemed precisely the best he could have hit upon for his purpose; and before he concluded I am very greatly mistaken if he had not contrived to make his audience, from roof to floor, feel that he was able to show very satisfactory, or at any rate very *incontrovertible*, reasons for the opinions he held. The loose manner in which the word *atom* is used, important as it is in scientific definition,<sup>1</sup> was one of the points on which he dwelt

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strongly. To give any *précis* of his speech is impossible without having notes ; and it was quite enough for me to follow him with my ears . . . . which, thanks to his clear enunciation, I did without losing a word . . . . without attempting to exercise my pencil also. Yet he spake rapidly, though with delightful distinctness, and almost the only action he used struck me as being peculiarly happy. He ran through the various points of his discourse with wonderful clearness, strength and precision, and as he concluded what it was his purpose to say on each, he with a sudden movement put forward his right hand, extended, as a man might do who had been running swiftly towards an object, and having reached it stops short ; seeming to signify, that having attained the point at which he intended to arrive in that direction, he should turn to where his attention was required in another.

His speech was concluded amidst a thunder of applause, in which it was evident that the Royal personages assisting at the meeting very cordially joined.

That Orioli was RIGHT on every point he had undertaken to advocate, appeared to be so strongly felt by everybody that, when his opponent rose to answer him, there was scarcely a countenance which did not seem to say . . . . "It is in vain to attempt any reply . . . . Orioli cannot be refuted."

But the eloquence of Professor de Bazer is not of a kind to be easily discomfited. It must



be rare, I think, to witness a more skilful display of verbal eloquence. The elegance and address with which the ground was run over were really admirable, and as a trial of skill, the speech formed a charming *pendant* to that of Orioli.... It was exactly such a pendant as a *capo d'opere* of Carlo Dolce might be to one of Michael Angelo.

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We have had one of the most tremendous thunder storms I ever witnessed, which lasted, with little intermission, through the whole night. In the midst of it came one of those grinding, close-quarter crashes which none, who have not witnessed a storm in climates less temperate than our own, can have any idea of.... Everybody, on comparing notes when they met the next morning, felt convinced that the thunder-bolt, as we call it, had fallen somewhere near us:.... and so in truth it proved; a building not above half a mile beyond the city walls having been entered and considerably injured by the electric fluid.... Some of the scientific observers now assembled here, collected specimens of various substances which had been acted upon by it, and brought them for the examination of the Mathematical Section upon a morning when I made a second visit to it.... A mass of brick had run into all sorts of queer shapes, and iron had been half melted, and its form lost.

Another subject which led to a great deal of

amusing discussion, but not, as I suspect, to any great utility, was the vagaries in which all Italian rivers seem to indulge themselves. One of the papers read was on these strange phenomena, and on the possibility of bringing the rebels into better order; but I do not find that any very sanguine hopes of achieving this, seem to have resulted from the discussion. These unruly rivers appear to give their by-dwellers something like the uncasiness occasioned by the untoward whims of a wayward child: sometimes making such an uproar that one knows not how to get out of his way fast enough, and sometimes running out of sight into holes and corners, and giving considerable uneasiness lest he should never make his appearance again. . . . There is little doubt, I suppose, as to which of these whims gives the greatest vexation to those who pass their lives among them; any length of absence being preferable to the danger to property, and even to life, which their outrageous conduct during their autumn and winter violence often occasions. But I confess that I have felt like a stranger and an alien on the subject, and am conscious that I should find it difficult not to hail with delight the most furious paroxysms into which their torrents could throw themselves, while I scarcely endure with patience the arid aspect presented by them in their fair-weather mood, when they usually assume the peaceable appearance of newly-mended high roads.

All jesting apart, however, the subject is one of great interest, and, I should imagine, of great importance also . . . for it is by no means a regular affair of fair weather, or foul, or of summer and winter results; but the vehement torrents in some places, and the nearly total disappearance of water in others, are events that appear in these latter days more frequently than heretofore. In many streams whose widely-extended beds give indication that time has been when they were expansive rivers, the mesne quantity of water, measured neither during the droughts of summer, nor the floods of winter, is said to be gradually diminishing; but I do not remember to have heard the contrary in any instance; nor of any new channels which might account for the deficiency of the old ones.

If this be really the fact, if the general quantity of running water in Italy be less than heretofore, and yearly lessening still, it requires, indeed, to mount high towards the secret council-chamber of Nature, even to the *fountain's head*, to comprehend it. But if the dry river-courses, which so greatly injure the beauty of the country, only indicate that the mass of stones brought down by the winter torrents from the mountains, have so raised their beds that some portion of the ordinary current has found a passage elsewhere, the matter is easily comprehended, and might also easily be remedied, whenever it was thought worth while to set Art at work

to do battle with Nature. For instance, I think that if such a city as Florence belonged to England the river communication with Leghorn would in a wonderfully short space of time be rendered as perfect as that between London Bridge and the Nore . . . . and it might be continued so at little more expense than is now incurred to keep up the dams which are thrown across the Arno above the city. Should it ever happen that the Sovereigns of Italy should take it into their heads to bestow as much care, science, and expense upon her rivers as they have done upon her roads, the aspect of the country would be wonderfully improved. To use the modest and cautious words of Philomente—

“ Je ne sais pas pour moi, si chacun me ressemble ;”

but assuredly to me the cutting up of the landscape by these wide, flat, shallow, dry, and alas ! frequent river-courses, does very greatly lessen the picturesque part of the pleasure which traversing Italy affords. . . . How often between Turin and Florence, have I wished to have my senses refreshed by the sight of a deep, dark, clear, and rapid river, like the Inn, or the Lowther . . . . the Arc, or the Dart . . . . the Moselle, or the Eden . . . . *the Danube or the Rhine !* . . . . and, hazardous as is the confession, I will not deny that the total want of this dearly-loved feature, has occasioned me a sort of disappointment, which I am assured, on excellent au-

thority, no person of really fine taste *can* feel in travelling through Italy.

As yet, however, I have seen but a part, and ought not, therefore, to attempt forming a judgment of the whole ; but of what I have seen I should say, that the charm of this most interesting country lies less in the superiority of nature, than of art.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.





